LORD OF THE MYSTERIES

by Cuttlefish That Loves Diving

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LORD OF THE MYSTERIES

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- VOLUME 1 -

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[Atlas Studios (Webnovel)]

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– STORY –

In the waves of steam and machinery, who could achieve extraordinary? In the fogs of history and darkness, who was whispering? I woke up from the realm of mysteries and opened my eyes to the world.

Firearms, cannons, battleships, airships, and difference machines. Potions, divination, curses, hanged-man, and sealed artifacts… The lights shone brightly, yet the secrets of the world were never far away. This was a legend of the “fool”.

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CHAPTER 1
CRIMSON

Painful!

How painful!

My head hurts so badly!

A gaudy and dazzling dreamworld filled with murmurs instantly shattered. The sound asleep Zhou Mingrui felt an abnormal throbbing pain in his head as though someone had ruthlessly lashed at him with a pole again and again. No, it was more like a sharp object pierced right through his temples followed by a twist!

Ouch… In his stupor, Zhou Mingrui attempted to turn around, look up, and sit up; however, he was completely unable to move his limbs as though he had lost control over his body.

From the looks of it, I'm still not awake. I'm still in a dream… Who knows, perhaps the next scene will be of me thinking I'm already awake, but in fact, am actually still sleeping…

Zhou Mingrui, who was not unfamiliar with similar encounters, tried his best to focus in order to escape the shackles placed upon him by the darkness and confusion.

However, while still in his reverie, whatever will he could summon was ethereal like a fleeting fog. He found his thoughts difficult to control and introspect. No matter how much he tried, he still lost his focus as random thoughts surfaced in his mind.

Why would I suddenly have such an excruciating headache in the middle of the night?

And it's really painful!

Could it be something like a cerebral hemorrhage?

*F**k, don't tell me I'm going to die young?*

I need to wake up! Now!

Eh? Why doesn't it seem to hurt as much as before? But why does it still feel like a blunt knife is slicing through my brains…

From the looks of it, sleep is impossible. How am I to show up for work tomorrow?

Why am I still thinking about work? This is some authentic headache. Of course I have to take time off! I don't have to worry about my manager's grumblings!

Hey, putting it that way, it doesn't seem too bad. Hehe, I can end up getting some spare time for myself!

Throbbing pain inundated Zhou Mingrui, allowing him to slowly accumulate immaterial strength until he was finally able to move his back and open his eyes. He finally broke free from his reverie.

His vision first blurred before it was screened by a faint crimson red. All he could see was a study desk made of burly wood in front of him. Right in the middle was an opened notebook with coarse, yellow pages. The title was eye-catchingly written with strange, deep black lettering.

To the left of the notebook was a stack of neatly arranged books, numbering about eight. The wall on their right was inset with grayish-white pipes with wall lamps connected to them.

The lamp had a classical Western style to it. It was about half the size of an adult's head with an inner layer of transparent glass and an exterior gridded with black metal.

Diagonally beneath the lamp was a black ink bottle shrouded in a pale red glow. Its embossed surface formed a blurry angel pattern.

In front of the ink bottle and to the right of the notebook sat a dark-colored pen with a fully circular body. Its tip shimmered with a faint glint while its cap rested right beside a brass revolver.

A gun? A revolver? Zhou Mingrui was completely taken aback. The things laid before him were alien to him. It looked nothing like his room!

While feeling shocked and confused, he discovered that the desk, notebook, ink bottle, and revolver were covered in a layer of crimson 'veil,' a result of the light shining from the window.

Subconsciously, he looked up and shifted his gaze up bit by bit.

In midair, a crimson moon hung high above the backdrop of a 'black velvet curtain,' glowing in silence.

This… Zhou Mingrui felt inexplicably horrified as he stood up abruptly. However, before his feet fully straightened, his brain protested with throbbing pain. It made him temporarily lose his strength as he fell uncontrollably. His buttocks slammed heavily onto the burly wood chair.

Pa!

The pain did little. Zhou Mingrui stood up again by propping himself up. He turned around in a fluster as he began to size up the environment he was in.

The room was not very large, with a brown door on each side of the room. Close to an opposite wall was a low wooden bed.

Between the bed and the left door was a cabinet. Its two doors were swung open and beneath it were five drawers.

To the side of the cabinet, there was the same grayish-white pipe on the wall at the height of a person. However, it was connected to a strange mechanical device with exposed gears and bearings in several spots.

Items resembling coal stoves sat in the right corner of the room near the table, along with soup pots, iron pots, and other kitchen utensils.

Across the right door was a dressing mirror with two cracks. Its bottom was made of wood and the patterns were simple and plain.

With a sweep of his gaze, Zhou Mingrui noticed himself in the mirror—the present him.

Black hair, brown eyes, a linen shirt, thinly built, average-looking features and a rather deep outline…

This… Zhou Mingrui immediately drew a gasp as many helpless and confused guesses surfaced in his mind.

The revolver in ancient European style and the crimson moon that looked different from Earth's moon could only mean one thing!

C-could I have transmigrated? Zhou Mingrui widened his mouth slightly.

He had grown up reading web novels and had often fantasized over such scenes. However, he momentarily found it hard to accept the situation when he found himself in one.

This was probably what it meant to love a fantasy [1] ? In a minute, Zhou Mingrui had already cursed himself while trying to make the best out of his adverse situation.

If not for the still throbbing headache that made his thoughts high strung but clear, he would have definitely suspected that he was dreaming.

Calm down, calm down, calm down… After taking a few deep breaths, Zhou Mingrui worked hard to stop panicking.

At that moment, as his mind and body calmed down, memories began flooding him as they slowly appeared in his mind!

Klein Moretti, a citizen of the Northern Continent's Loen Kingdom, Awwa County, City of Tingen. He is also a recent graduate from the Department of History at Khoy University…

His father was a sergeant of the Royal Army who had sacrificed himself during a colonial conflict with the Southern Continent. The bereavement allowance gave Klein the opportunity to study at a private language school and laid the foundation for his admission into university…

His mother was a devotee of the Evernight Goddess. She passed away the year Klein passed the entrance examinations to Khoy University…

He also had an elder brother and a younger sister. They stayed in a two bedroom apartment together…

Their family was not wealthy and its situation could even be described as somewhat wanting. At present, the family was supported solely by the elder brother who worked at an import and export company as a clerk…

As a history graduate, Klein grasped knowledge of the ancient Feysac language—deemed the origin of all languages in the Northern Continent—as well as the Hermes language which often appeared in ancient mausoleums as well as text regarding sacrificial and praying rituals…

Hermes language? Zhou Mingrui's mind stirred as he reached out to rub his throbbing temples. He cast his gaze toward the table at the opened notebook. He noticed that the text on the yellowed paper turned from

strange to alien, before turning from alien to something familiar. It then turned into something readable.

It was text written in Hermes language!

The dark ink wrote the following:

"Everyone will die, including me."

Hiss! Zhou Mingrui felt inexplicably horrified. He instinctively leaned back in an attempt to widen the distance between him and the notebook, as well as the text on it.

Being very weak, he nearly fell down but managed to extend his hands in a fluster to hold onto the edge of the table. He felt that the surrounding air was turbulent as though there were faint murmurings resounding in it. The feeling was akin to hearing horror stories being recounted by elders when he was young.

He shook his head, believing that everything was an illusion. Zhou Mingrui found his balance and shifted his gaze from the notebook as he heaved for breath.

This time, his gaze landed on the shimmering brass revolver. He suddenly had a question arise in him.

With Klein's family situation, how can they have the money or means to buy a revolver?

Zhou Mingrui could not help but frown.

While in deep thought, he suddenly discovered a red handprint to the side of the table. Its color was deeper than the moonlight and much thicker than the 'veil.'

It was a bloody handprint!

"A bloody handprint?" Zhou Mingrui subconsciously flipped his right hand that had been holding the edge of the table. Looking down, he saw that his palm and fingers were covered in blood.

At the same time, the throbbing pain in his head continued. Although it had weakened a little, it continued incessantly.

Did I smash my head open?

Zhou Mingrui guessed as he turned around and walked towards a cracked dressing mirror.

A few steps later, a black-haired figure of medium build and brown eyes appeared clearly in front of him. The person had a distinct scholarly air to him.

Is this the present me? Klein Moretti?

Zhou Mingrui was stunned momentarily. Since there was insufficient lighting at night, he failed to see something clearly. He continued forward until he was just a step short from colliding with the mirror.

Using the crimson veil-like moonlight as illumination, he turned his head and examined the corner of his forehead.

A clear reflection appeared in the mirror. His temple had a grotesque wound with burn marks along its periphery. Blood stained the wound's surroundings and there were grayish-white brain juices squirming slowly within.

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CHAPTER 2
SITUATION

Tap! Tap! Tap!

Zhou Mingrui reeled back in fear at the sight that greeted him. It was as though the person in the dressing mirror was not himself, but a dessicated corpse.

How could a person with such grievous wounds be still alive!?

He turned his head in disbelief again and checked the other side. Even though he was a distance away and the lighting was poor, he could still see the penetrating wound and dark red blood stains.

"This…”

Zhou Mingrui drew a deep breath as he tried hard to calm himself.

He reached out to press his left chest and sensed his racing heart that exuded immense vitality.

He then touched his exposed skin. Beneath the slight coldness was flowing warmth.

When he squatted down and after verifying that his knees could bend, Zhou Mingrui stood up again and calmed down.

"What's happening?" he muttered with a frown. He planned to inspect his head injury seriously once more.

He took two steps forward and suddenly paused. The moonlight of the sanguine moon was relatively dark, so it was insufficient for his 'serious inspection.'

A memory fragment triggered as Zhou Mingrui turned his head to look at the grayish-white pipes and the metallic-gridded lamp on the wall right beside the study desk.

This was the most common gas lamp of the times. Its flame was stable and its illumination capabilities were excellent.

With Klein Moretti's family situation, even a kerosene lamp was a dream, much less a gas lamp. Using candles was most apt for their standing and stature. However, back when he burned the midnight oil four years ago to be admitted into Khoy University, his elder brother, Benson, felt that it was an important matter which their family's future depended upon. Therefore, he insisted on creating conducive studying conditions for Klein even if it meant taking on debt.

Of course, Benson, who was literate and had worked for several years, was not a rash person who did not think of the consequences. He had quite some tricks up his sleeve. He reasoned with the landlord to 'raise the apartment's standards by installing gas pipes to improve the likelihood of rentals in the future.' The landlord was convinced and provided the money to complete the basic modifications. Then, using the convenience of working at an import and export company, he purchased a brand new gas lamp which was nearly at cost price. In the end, all he needed was to use his savings and did not need to borrow money.

After the memory fragment flashed past his mind, Zhou Mingrui came to the desk where he turned the pipe's valve and began twisting the gas lamp's switch.

With a sputtering sound, a spark sounded from friction. Light did not descend upon Zhou Mingrui as he had expected.

He twisted the switch a few more times, but all the gas lamp did was sputter and remain dark.

"Hmm…" Retracting his hand and pressing on his left temple, Zhou Mingrui sought for the reason by rummaging through his memory fragments.

A few seconds later, he turned around and walked toward the door. He arrived at the machine installation which was similarly inset into the wall and had grayish-white pipes connected to it.

This was a gas meter!

After seeing the exposed gears and bearings, Zhou Mingrui took out a coin from his trousers' pocket.

It was dark yellow in color and had a bronze shimmer to it. The front of the coin was engraved with a portrait of a crown-wearing man, and there was a '1' on a clump of wheat on the back.

Zhou Mingrui knew that this was the most basic currency of the Loen Kingdom. It was called a copper penny. One penny's purchasing power was roughly three to four yuan before his transmigration. Such coins had other denominations such as the five pence, a halfpence and a quarterpence. Despite the three types, the denominations were not in small-enough units. In everyday life, one had to buy several different things just to spend a single coin from time to time.

After flipping the coin—which was only minted and circulated after King George III ascended to the throne—a few times, Zhou Mingrui inserted it into the gas meter's thin vertical 'mouth.'

Clink! Clang!

After the penny fell to the bottom of the meter, the sound of grinding gears sounded immediately, producing a short but melodious mechanical rhythm.

Zhou Mingrui stared at the meter for a few seconds before returning to the burly wood desk. He then reached out to twist the gas lamp's switch.

After some sputtering, there was a sharp sound!

A fire plume ignited and rapidly grew. Bright light first occupied the internals of the wall lamp before penetrating the transparent glass, blanketing the room with a warm glow.

The darkness quickly receded as the crimson retreated out the window. Zhou Mingrui felt at ease for a baffling reason as he quickly came in front of the dressing mirror.

This time, he seriously inspected his temple and did not miss a single detail.

After a few rounds of inspection, he realized that apart from the original blood stain, liquid was no longer flowing out of the grotesque wound. It appeared like it had received the best hemostasis and bandaging. As for the slowly squirming grayish-white brain and the discernible growth of flesh and blood around the wound, it meant that the wound might take thirty to forty minutes, or maybe even two to three hours before it would only leave a light scar.

"The restorative effects that transmigration brings?" Zhou Mingrui curled up the right corner of his mouth as he muttered silently.

Following that, he let out a long sigh. Regardless, he was still alive!

After settling his mind, he pulled open a drawer and took out a tiny piece of soap. He took one of the old and tattered towels hanging by the side of the cupboard and opened the door. He then walked to the public bathroom which was shared by the tenants on the second floor.

Yes, I should clean up the blood stains on my head, or I'll keep looking like a crime scene. It's fine scaring myself, but if I were to scare my sister,

Melissa, when she gets up early in the morning tomorrow, it would be quite problematic!

The corridor outside was pitch black. Silhouettes were barely accentuated by the crimson moonlight from the window at the end of the corridor. They looked like a pair of monster eyes that silently observed the living late into the night.

Zhou Mingrui lightened his footsteps as he walked towards the communal bathroom with a shuddering fear.

When he entered, there was even more moonlight, allowing him to see everything clearly. Zhou Mingrui stood in front of a wash basin and turned the tap's knob.

Upon hearing the gushing sound of water, he suddenly recalled his landlord, Mr. Franky.

As water was included in the rent, this short and thin gentleman who wore a top hat, a vest, and a black suit, always inspected the bathroom actively to take note of any sounds of flowing water.

If the water gushed too loudly, Mr. Franky would ignore all of his gentlemanly traits by flailing his walking stick and striking the bathroom's door, shouting things like 'Darn thief,' 'Wastage is a shameless matter,' 'I'll remember you,' 'If I see this happen another time, scram along with your filthy luggage,' 'Mark my words, this is the most value-for-money apartment in Tingen City. You will not find a more kindly landlord anywhere else!'

Putting away those thoughts, Zhou Mingrui used a moist towel to clean the blood stains from his face again and again.

After checking himself using the rundown mirror in the bathroom and verifying that all that was left were a hideous wound and a pale face did

Zhou Mingrui relax. Then, he took off his linen shirt and used a bar of soap to wash away the bloodstains.

At that moment, he knitted his brows and recalled of a possible problem.

The wound was too exaggerated and there was too much blood. Apart from his body, his room likely still had signs of his injury!

After Zhou Mingrui was done with his linen shirt a few minutes later, he briskly returned to his apartment with a moist towel. He first wiped the blood handprint on the desk and then, using the gas lamp's illumination, sought out spots which he missed out.

He immediately discovered that quite a substantial amount of blood had splattered onto the floor beneath the desk. And there was a yellow bullet to the left side of the wall.

"Releasing a round with a revolver pointed at the temple?" After mixing and matching the clues from before, Zhou Mingrui had a rough idea how Klein had died.

He was in no hurry to verify his guess. Instead, he seriously wiped away the blood stains and cleaned up the 'scene.' Following that, he took the bullet and returned to the side of his desk. He opened the revolver's cylinder and poured out the rounds inside.

A total of five rounds and a cartridge shell all had a brass luster to them.

"Indeed…” Zhou Mingrui looked at the empty cartridge shell in front of him and stuffed the rounds back into the cylinder while nodding.

He shifted his gaze to the left and it landed on the notebook's words: 'Everyone will die, including me.' Following that, even more questions arose in him.

Where did the gun come from?

Was it suicide or a faked suicide?

What kind of trouble could a history graduate of humble origins get himself into?

Why would such a suicide method only leave behind so little blood? Was it because I transmigrated in a timely manner and it came with healing benefits?

After pondering for a moment, Zhou Mingrui changed into another linen shirt. He sat on the chair and began pondering over more important matters.

Klein's experience was still not something he needed to concern himself with. The true problem was to figure out the reason for his transmigration and if he could return!

His parents, relatives, best buddies, and friends. The fascinating world of the Internet and all sorts of delicious delicacies… These were reasons that prompted his desire to return!

Click. Click. Click.… Zhou Mingrui's right hand was subconsciously pulling out the revolver's cylinder and slamming it back into place, again and again.

Yea, there has not been much difference for me between this period of time and the past. I was just a little unlucky, but why would I transmigrate for no baffling reason?

Bad luck… Yes, I tried a luck enhancement ritual before dinner today!

A thought flashed in Zhou Mingrui's mind, illuminating the memories which were concealed by a fog of confusion.

As a qualified keyboard politician, keyboard historian, keyboard economist, keyboard biologist, and keyboard folklorist, he had always deemed himself as 'knowing something of everything.' Of course, his best buddy would often mock him as 'only knowing a little of everything.'

And one of them was Chinese Divination.

When he visited his hometown last year, he had discovered a thread-bound book titled 'Quintessential Divination and Arcane Arts of the Qin and Han Dynasty' at an old bookstore. It looked pretty interesting and could aid him in posturing on the Internet, so he bought it. Unfortunately, his interest was short-lived. The vertical script it used made the reading experience horrible. All he did was flip through the beginning pages before he threw it into a corner.

He had experienced a spate of bad luck in the past month—losing his cell phone, customers running away after cheating him, and mistakes at work. Only then did he suddenly recall the luck enhancement ritual written at the beginning of 'Quintessential Divination and Arcane Arts.' Furthermore, the requirements were extremely simple, without any basic foundation requirements.

All he needed was to get four portions of the staple food in his area and place them in the four corners of his room. They could be placed on furniture such as tables and cupboards. Then, standing in the middle of the room, he had to take four steps in a counter-clockwise fashion to make a square. The first step required him to sincerely chant 'Blessings Stem From The Immortal Lord of Heaven and Earth.' The second step was to silently chant, 'Blessings Stem From The Sky Lord of Heaven and Earth.' The third step was 'Blessings Stem From The Exalted Thearch of Heaven and Earth,' and the fourth step was 'Blessings Stem From The Celestial Worthy of Heaven and Earth.' After the four steps were taken, he needed to close his eyes and wait five minutes in his original spot. Only then would the ritual be considered complete.

Since it did not cost him any money, he found the book, followed what was stipulated, and did it before dinner. However… nothing happened back then.

Who would have guessed that he would actually transmigrate in the middle of the night!

Transmigration!

"There is a distinct possibility that it's due to that luck enhancement ritual… Yes, I should give it a try here tomorrow. If it's really because of that, I stand a chance of transmigrating back!" Zhou Mingrui stopped flicking the revolver's cylinder and suddenly sat straight up.

Regardless, he had to give it a try!

He had to attempt a Hail Mary!

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CHAPTER 3
MELISSA

After confirming his plan, Zhou Mingrui immediately felt he had a mental crutch. His fear and unease were all swept away into a corner of his mind.

Only then did he had the mood to carefully study Klein's memory fragments.

Zhou Mingrui habitually stood up before turning off the pipe's valve. He watched the wall lamp gradually dim until its flame extinguished before sitting back down. As he subconsciously fiddled with the revolver's brass cylinder, he pressed the side of his head. He slowly recalled his memories in the crimson-dyed darkness as though he was the most attentive viewer in a movie theater.

Perhaps as a result of having a bullet pass through his head, Klein's memories were like shattered glass. Not only were the memories not contiguous, there were many spots which were clearly missing. For example, memories pertaining to how the exquisite revolver appeared in his possession, whether he had committed suicide, or was killed, as well as the meaning of the words 'Everyone will die, including me' on the notebook, or whether he had participated in anything odd two days before the incident.

Not only had these particular memories become fragmented, there were also missing pieces. It was the same even for knowledge he ought to know. In light of the present situation, Zhou Mingrui believed that if Klein were to return to university, it was unlikely he could graduate. This was despite him having left campus just days ago without relaxing one bit.

He needs to participate in the Tingen University's History department interview two days later…

The university graduates of Loen Kingdom do not have the tradition of staying at their alma mater… His mentor had given him a recommendation letter for Tingen University and Backlund University…

…

Through the window, Zhou Mingrui silently observed the red moon setting in the west. The gradual sinking of the moon continued until faint light glowed from the east, dyeing the horizon golden.

At that moment, there was a commotion inside the apartment. Soon, the sound of footsteps approached his door.

"Melissa is awake… She's really as punctual as always." Zhou Mingrui smiled. Due to Klein's memories, seeing Melissa made him feel as though she was really his younger sister.

However, I do not have a younger sister… He immediately contradicted himself.

Melissa was different from Benson and Klein. Her rudimentary education was not completed at the Sunday school classes offered by the Church of the Evernight Goddess. When she reached schooling age, the Loen Kingdom had enacted the 'Basic Education Law.' A Primary and Secondary Education Committee was established and was specially provided with funding, increasing the kingdom's investment into education.

In less than three years, under the premise that numerous church schools would be incorporated, many public primary schools were established to strictly maintain the principle of religious neutrality. This was to prevent education from involving itself in the conflicts between the Lord of Storms, Evernight Goddess, and the God of Steam and Machinery.

Compared to Sunday school that only cost a copper penny a week, a public primary school's cost of three pence a week appeared rather expensive. However, the former only provided education every Sunday, whereas the latter provided six days of classes a week. In conclusion, the price was so low that it was almost free.

Melissa was different from most girls. From a young age, she enjoyed things like gears, springs, and bearings. Her ambition was to be a steam mechanic.

Having suffered from a lack of culture, Benson, who knew the importance of education, supported his sister's dreams just like how he supported Klein's university education. After all, Tingen Technical School was only considered secondary education. There was no need for her to attend language school or a public school for more knowledge.

In July last year, fifteen-year-old Melissa passed her entrance examinations and fulfilled her dreams of becoming a student at the Tingen Technical School's Steam and Machinery department. As such, her weekly school fees raised to nine pence.

Meanwhile, Benson's company was affected by the situation in the Southern Continent. There was a drastic drop both in profit and business transactions. More than a third of the employees were retrenched. In order to keep his job and maintain their livelihood, Benson could only accept more arduous tasks. He had to work overtime more frequently or head to places with harsh environments. That was what he was occupied with the past few days.

It was not that Klein did not think of helping share his elder brother's burden but being born a commoner and having been admitted into an average language school, he felt a strong sense of inadequacy when he enrolled into university. For example, as the origin of all languages in the Northern Continent, the ancient language of Feysac was something all the children of nobles and of the wealthy class would learn from a young age. In contrast, he only made first contact with it in university.

He faced many similar aspects during his schooling career. Klein nearly gave his all and often stayed up late into the night and woke up early before barely managing to catch up to the others, eventually allowing him to graduate with average results.

Memories regarding his elder brother and younger sister remained active in Zhou Mingrui's mind until he turned the doorknob open. Only then did he jolt awake and remember that he held a revolver in his hand.

This was a semi-regulated item!

It will scare children!

Also, there's still the wound on my head!

With Melissa arriving at any moment, Zhou Mingrui pressed onto his temple and hurriedly pulled open a desk drawer and threw the revolver in before slamming it close.

"What happened?" Melissa looked over curiously when she heard the commotion.

She was still in the prime of her youth. Even though she did not have much nutritious food to eat, making her face thin and slightly pale, her skin remained lustrous as it exuded the vibes of a young girl.

When Zhou Mingrui saw his sister's brown eyes look over, he forcibly composed himself and picked up an item beside his hand before calmly closing the drawer to conceal the existence of the revolver. He placed his other hand on his temple, the texture confirming that his wound had already healed!

He took out a silver vine-leaf pocket watch and pressed the top gently, causing its cover to flip open.

It was a picture of the siblings' father. It was the most valuable item the Royal Army sergeant left behind, but being a second-hand item, it would often malfunction from time to time in recent years even though he had gotten a watchsmith to fix it. It had embarrassed Benson who enjoyed bringing it with him to elevate his status many a time, so it was thrown away back at home in the end.

It had to be said that perhaps Melissa did have talent in machinery. After grasping the principles behind the watch, she borrowed the tools from her Technical School to fiddle with the pocket watch. Recently, she even claimed to have fixed it!

Zhou Mingrui looked at the watch's open cover and saw that the second hand was not moving. Subconsciously, he twisted the top dial to wind the pocket watch.

However, despite winding it a few times, he did not hear the sound of taut springs. The second hand remained motionless.

"It looks like it's broken again." He looked at his sister while trying to find a topic of conversation.

Melissa shot him an expressionless glance and briskly walked over to take the pocket watch away.

She stood in her spot and pulled up the button sitting atop the pocket watch. With a few simple turns, the tick-tocking of the second hand sounded.

Isn't pulling the button up usually meant to adjust the time… Zhou Mingrui's expression immediately turned blank.

At that moment, a bell chimed from a faraway cathedral. It chimed six times, sounding distant and ethereal.

Melissa tilted her head to listen to it and pulled the button up once again. Following that, she turned it to synchronize the time.

"It's okay now," she said simply without emotion. She then pressed the top button back and handed the pocket watch back to Zhou Mingrui.

Zhou Mingrui returned a smile politely in embarrassment.

Melissa gave her elder brother a piercing stare before turning to walk to the cupboard. She took her toiletries and towel before opening the door to leave. She headed for the public bathroom.

Why did her expression have a look of disparagement and resignation?

Is it a look of love and concern for a retarded brother?

Zhou Mingrui lowered his head and chuckled. He closed the pocket watch's cover with a click before opening it again.

He repeated this action as his idle thoughts focused on a question.

Klein committed suicide without a silencer. Well, I'll consider it as suicide for now. His suicide should have caused quite a commotion; yet, Melissa, who was just a wall away, did not notice it at all.

Was she sleeping too soundly? Or is Klein's suicide shrouded in mystery to begin with?

Click! The pocket watch opened. *Clack!* The pocket watch closed… Melissa returned from washing up and saw her brother's subconscious act of constantly opening and closing the pocket watch.

Her gaze was once again glazed with exasperation as she said with a sweet voice, "Klein, take out all the remaining bread. Remember to buy fresh ones today. There's meat and peas too. Your interview is soon. I'll make you mutton stewed with peas."

As she spoke, she moved a stove out from a corner. With some charcoal, she boiled a pot of hot water.

Before the water boiled, she opened the cupboard's lowest drawer and took out what seemed like a treasure—a can of inferior tea leaves. She threw about ten leaves into the pot and pretended that it was real tea.

Melissa poured two big cups of tea as she shared two pieces of rye bread with Zhou Mingrui over tea.

There is no sawdust or excessive gluten mixed in, but it is unappetizing… Zhou Mingrui still felt weak and was starving. He forced himself to swallow the bread with the tea while complaining inwardly.

Melissa finished eating a few minutes later. After she adjusted her black hair that reached down to her vest, she looked at Zhou Mingrui and said, "Remember to buy fresh bread. All we need is eight pounds. The weather is hot, so the bread will easily spoil. Also, buy the mutton and peas. Remember to buy them!"

Indeed, she was showing concern for her dull brother. She even had to repeat to emphasize it another time… Zhou Mingrui nodded with a smile.

"Alright."

Regarding the Loen Kingdom's pound, Zhou Mingrui matched Klein's muscle memory with his. He believed it was close to half a kilogram of what he was accustomed to.

Melissa did not say anything further. She stood up and tidied the area. After packing away the last bit of bread for lunch, she put on a tattered veil cap that their mother left behind, picked up a self-sewn bag used to carry her books and stationery, and prepared to leave.

It was not Sunday, so she had an entire day of classes to attend.

Walking from their apartment to Tingen Technical School took about fifty minutes. There were public horse carriages that cost a penny a kilometer

with a limit of four pence in the city and six pence in the city outskirts. In order to save money, Melissa would leave ahead of time and walk to school.

Moments after she opened the main door, she paused in her footsteps and turned her body halfway, saying, "Klein, don't buy too much mutton or peas. Benson might come back on Sunday. Oh, and remember we only need eight pounds of bread."

"Alright. Sure thing," answered Zhou Mingrui exasperatedly.

Simultaneously, he repeated the word 'Sunday' a few times in his head.

In the Northern Continent, a year was similarly split into twelve months. Every year, there was 365 or 366 days. A week was similarly split into seven days.

The splitting of months was a result of astronomical observations. It made Zhou Mingrui suspect whether he was in a parallel world. As for the splitting of days, it was a result of religion. This was because Northern Continent had seven orthodox gods—the Eternal Blazing Sun, the Lord of Storms, the God of Knowledge and Wisdom, the Evernight Goddess, Mother Earth, the God of Combat, and the God of Steam and Machinery.

Watching his sister close the door and leave, Zhou Mingrui suddenly sighed. Soon, his thoughts focused onto the luck enhancement ritual.

Sorry, I really wish to return home…

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CHAPTER 4
DIVINATION

Returning to his chair again, he heard the faraway cathedral's bells chime again. It continued seven times before Zhou Mingrui slowly stood up. He went up front to the cupboard and took out his clothes.

A black vest with a matching suit, trousers that clung tightly to his legs, a halved top hat and his faint scholarly air made Zhou Mingrui feel like he was watching an English drama set in the Victorian era.

He suddenly muttered softly as he shook his head with a wry smile, "I'm not going for an interview. All I'm doing is buying some ingredients to prepare for my luck enhancement ritual…”

Klein was so concerned about his impending interview that it became instinct. When he was not focused enough, he habitually wore his only decent set of clothing.

After taking a breath, Zhou Mingrui took off his suit and vest, switching to a brownish-yellow coat. He also changed to a felt hat with a rounded edge of the same color.

With his outfit done, he walked to the side of the bed and lifted a square cushion. He reached his hand into an inconspicuous hole beneath and rummaged around before finding an intermediate layer.

When he retracted his right hand, there was a roll of notes in his palm. There were about eight notes with faded dark green colors.

These were all the savings Benson had at the moment. It even included the living expenses for the next three days. Two of them were five-soli notes and the remaining were one-soli notes.

In the Loen Kingdom's currency system, soli was ranked second. It originated from ancient silver coins. One soli was equivalent to twelve copper pence. They had denominations of one and five soli.

At the top of the currency system was the gold pound. They were also paper based but were guaranteed by gold and pegged directly. A gold pound was equivalent to twenty soli. They had denominations of one, five, and ten gold pounds.

Zhou Mingrui spread a note and caught a whiff of the faint unique ink.

This was the smell of money.

Perhaps a result of Klein's memory fragments or his constant desire for money, Zhou Mingrui felt like he had instantly fallen in love with these notes.

Look, their designs are so beautiful. It makes the stern and old-fashioned George III and his two mustaches appear especially adorable…

Look, the watermark that can be seen when the note is placed against sunlight is so alluring. The exquisite design for the anti-counterfeit label makes it completely different from those fake fancy schlocks!

Zhou Mingrui admired it for nearly a minute before pulling out two one-soli notes. He then rolled up the remaining notes and stuffed them back into the cushion's concealed layer.

After arranging and flattening the cloth around the hole, Zhou Mingrui folded the two notes he had taken out neatly and placed them into the left pocket of his brownish-yellow jacket. He separated the notes from the few pence he had in his trouser pocket.

With all of this done, he placed a key into his right pocket and brought a dark brownish paper bag along with him and quickly walked toward the door.

His shuffling footsteps slowed down from a brisk pace until it eventually stopped.

Zhou Mingrui stood by the door and was unsure when he had already begun to frown.

Klein's suicide was fraught with peculiarities. Would he encounter any 'accidents' if he were to leave just like that?

After some deep thought, Zhou Mingrui returned to his desk and pulled open the drawer. He then took out the shimmering brass revolver.

This was the only defensive weapon he could think of, and it was the only weapon with sufficient power!

Although he had never practicing shooting, just pulling such a revolver out would definitely daunt anyone!

He caressed the revolver's cold metal before stuffing his revolver into the pocket where his notes were. He clasped the money in his palm as his fingers pressed onto the gun's handle. It was perfectly concealed.

Feeling secure, he who knew a little of everything suddenly had a worry.

Would I end up misfiring?

Being deluged with such a thought, Zhou Mingrui quickly thought of a solution. He drew the revolver and released the cylinder. He then aligned the empty chamber which was a result of the 'suicide' along the gun's hammer before closing it.

This way, even if there was a misfire, he would discharge an 'empty round!'

After stuffing his revolver back into his pocket, Zhou Mingrui kept his left hand in there.

He pressed down on his hat with his right hand and pulled open the door before leaving.

The corridor during the day remained dim as limited sunlight shone in from the window situated at the end of the corridor. Zhou Mingrui quickly went down the stairs and left the apartment before taking in the brilliance and warmth of the sun.

Although it was almost July, it was still considered the middle of summer. However, Tingen was situated north of the Loen Kingdom, so it had unique climate characteristics. The highest annual temperature was not even 30°C on Earth, with even cooler mornings. However, the streets were awash with filthy water and strewn junk. From Klein's memories, this was not a rare sight in low-income communities, even if there were sewers. After all, there were just too many people and people needed to survive.

"Come and try our delicious roasted fish!"

"Hot and fresh oyster soup. Drink a bowl in the morning and feel invigorated all day!"

"Fresh fish from the port for just five pence apiece!"

"Muffins and eel soup make the perfect combination!"

"Conch! Conch! Conch!"

"Vegetables freshly plucked from the farms outside the city. Cheap and fresh!"

…

The mobile hawkers who sold vegetables, fruits, and hot food shouted along the streets as they beckoned the rushing pedestrians. Some of them would stop and carefully compare before purchasing. Others would impatiently wave their hands as they had yet to find work for the day.

Zhou Mingrui took in a whiff of the air that mixed both noxious and fragrant aromas. As he clenched the revolver tightly in his left hand, he held the notes tight. He pressed down on his hat with his right hand while passing through the busy street, slouching a little.

There was bound to be thieves in populated areas. Furthermore, this street had no lack of poor citizens who were working part time after losing their previous jobs. There were also starving children that were exploited by adults to do their bidding.

He proceeded forward until he reached a point where the crowdedness around him restored to normal. He straightened his back and raised his head to look down the street.

There was a vagrant accordionist busking. The melody was sometimes pleasant, sometimes fervent.

Beside him were several children in ragged clothes with sallow complexions due to malnutrition.

They listened to the music and moved to the beat, dancing self-made choreographies. Their faces were filled with joy as though they were a prince or an angel.

A deadpan woman passed by; her skirt was dirty and her skin was dull.

Her gaze appeared dull and sluggish. Only when she looked at the bunch of children did a faint glow flash. It was as though she had seen herself from three decades ago.

Zhou Mingrui overtook her and turned into another street before stopping at Smyrin Bakery.

The owner of the bakery was a seventy-plus year old granny named Wendy Smyrin. Her hair was completely grayish-white and she always wore a genial smile. From the beginning of Klein's memories, she had been here selling bread and pastries.

Oh, the Tingen biscuits and lemon cakes she bakes are very delicious…

Zhou Mingrui gulped a mouthful of saliva and smiled.

"Mrs. Smyrin, eight pounds of rye bread."

"Oh. Dear Klein, where's Benson? Is he not back?" Wendy asked smilingly.

"In a few more days," answered Zhou Mingrui vaguely.

As Wendy took the rye bread, she sighed. "He sure is a hardworking lad. He will have a good wife."

Upon saying this, the corners of her lips curled up as she said playfully, "All is good now. You have already graduated. You are a history graduate of our Khoy University~ Oh, you will soon be able to earn money. You should not be staying in the apartment you are currently living in. At the very least, you should have a bathroom you can call your own."

"Mrs. Smyrin, you seem to be a young and energetic woman today." All Zhou Mingrui could do was respond with a dry smile.

If Klein were to successfully pass his interview and become a lecturer at Tingen University, it was true that his family would immediately be pushed up to a higher socioeconomic status!

In his memory fragments, he had once fantasized about renting a bungalow in the suburbs. There would be five or six rooms, two bathrooms, a huge

balcony upstairs, two rooms, a dining room, a living room, a kitchen, a bathroom, and an underground storage room on the first floor.

This was not a wishful dream. Even a lecturer on probation at Tingen University would have a weekly salary of two gold pounds. After the probationary period, the salary would be raised to three gold pounds and ten soli. One had to know that despite working for so many years, Klein's brother, Benson, only had a weekly salary of one pound and ten soli. Ordinary workers at a factory did not even get a pound or, at best, a little more. And rent for a bungalow was about nineteen soli to one pound and eighteen soli.

"This is the difference between earning three to four thousand yuan and earning fourteen to fifteen thousand yuan a month…" Zhou Mingrui mumbled to himself.

However, all of this was under the premise that he passed either the Tingen University or Backlund University interviews.

There were not many other opportunities. People without any connections were unable to get recommendations to become a public servant. And those who studied history were more limited in job opportunities. There was not much demand for private consultants from the aristocrats, banks, or industrial magnates.

Taking into account that the knowledge Klein grasped were fragmented and incomplete, Zhou Mingrui felt awkward and guilty towards Mrs. Smyrin's expectations of him.

"No, I have always been this young," answered Wendy humorously.

As she spoke, she packed the sixteen rye bread she had weighed into the brown paper bag that Zhou Mingrui had brought. She stretched out her right hand and said, "Nine pence."

Every rye bread weighted about half a pound as differences were inevitable.

"Nine pence? Wasn't it eleven pence two days ago?" Zhou Mingrui asked subconsciously.

It cost 15 pence the month before the previous month.

"You have to thank the people who protested on the streets for the repeal of the Grain Act," said Wendy as she shrugged.

Zhou Mingrui nodded in vague acknowledgment. Klein's memories regarding this was incomplete. All he remembered was that the core tenet of the Grain Act was to protect the prices of domestic agriculture products. Once the prices rose to a certain level, grain imports from Southern nations like Feynapotter, Masin, Lenburg were stopped.

Why would people protest the act?

Without saying much, Zhou Mingrui, afraid he would end up pulling out the revolver, carefully took out his notes and handed one of them over to Mrs. Smyrin.

He was given three copper pence in change. Stuffing them into his trouser pocket, he took the paper bag containing the bread and headed for the 'Lettuce and Meat' market across the street. He was working hard for the mutton stewed with peas his sister had exhorted.

There was a municipal square at the intersection of Iron Cross Street and Daffodil Street. Many tents were erected there, and clowns dressed in odd and funny attires were distributing fliers.

"There's a circus performance tomorrow night?" Zhou Mingrui glanced at the fliers in the hands of others as he read their contents under his breath.

Melissa would definitely like it. However, how much is the entrance fee?

With that thought, Zhou Mingrui went closer.

Just as he was about to ask a clown with a red and yellow painted face, a hoarse woman's voice sounded from beside him.

"Would you like to try a divination?"

Zhou Mingrui subconsciously turned his head and saw a woman wearing a pointed hat and a long black dress standing in front of a short tent.

Her face was smeared with red and yellow paint and her eyes were a profound grayish-blue.

"No," Zhou Mingrui shook his head in response. He did not have the spare cash for divination.

The woman laughed and said, "My tarot divination is very accurate."

"Tarot…" Zhou Mingrui was instantly dumbfounded.

This pronunciation was almost identical to the tarot cards on Earth!

And tarot cards from Earth were a set of cards used for divination. They just had graphics that represented different omens.

Wait… He suddenly recalled the origins of tarot divination in this world.

It did not originate from the seven orthodox gods nor was it an ancient legacy. Instead, it was created by the Intis Republic's Consul of that era, Roselle Gusta, more than 170 years ago.

This Mr. Roselle invented the steam engine, improved the sailing boat, overthrew the Intis Kingdom's imperial rule, and was recognized by the God of Craftsmanship. He also became the first Consul of the Intis Republic.

Later, he invaded other nations and placed Lenburg and other nations under his protection. He made the Loen Kingdom, Feynapotter, Feysac Empire

and other powerful Northern Continent nations bow down to the Intis Republic. Following that, the Republic was then changed to an Empire and he became the self-proclaimed 'Emperor Caesar.'

It was during Roselle's rule that the Church of Craftsmanship received its first public holy revelation since the Fifth Epoch. Ever since, the God of Craftsmanship was changed to the God of Steam and Machinery.

Roselle also invented tarot divination. He also established the contemporary system of paper-based cards and their playstyles. There were many familiar styles that Zhou Mingrui was familiar with, such as Upgrade, Fighting the Landlord, Texas Poker, and Quint…

In addition, the marine fleets he sent out discovered a sea route that led to the Southern Continent through the stormy and turbulent seas. This also began the era of colonialism.

Unfortunately, he was betrayed in his old age. In the year 1198 of the Fifth Epoch, he was assassinated by the combined forces of the Church of the Eternal Blazing Sun, the former Intis royal family—the Sauron family, and other aristocrats. He eventually died in the White Maple Palace.

This… To recall such general knowledge suddenly made him facepalm.

Could this be a transmigration senior?

With this in mind, Zhou Mingrui was intrigued to see what tarot cards looked like. Therefore, he nodded at the pointy hat woman with the painted face and said, "If the… well… price is reasonable, I'll give it a try."

The woman immediately said with a laugh, "Sir, you are the first one here today, so it's on the house."

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CHAPTER 5
RITUAL

Free? Free things cost the most!

Zhou Mingrui silently mumbled and decided that he would not purchase any additional services whatever they were. He would firmly refuse them all.

If you are really that capable, try divining that I transmigrated here!

With this in mind, Zhou Mingrui followed behind the woman whose face was painted red and yellow, stooping low to enter the low tent.

The tent's interior was extremely dark, illuminated only by several beams of light that managed to seep inside. A table covered with paper cards could be made out faintly in the low illumination.

The woman with the sharp pointy hat was not affected by this at all. Her long black dress glided as though it was moving over water while she went around to the table. She sat on the opposite side and lighted a candle.

The dim yellow light flickered, causing the inside of the tent to appear bright and dark at the same time. It instantly added a much more mysterious feel to the atmosphere.

Zhou Mingrui sat down quietly, his gaze sweeping over the tarot cards on the table where he discovered familiar cards like "The Magician," "The Emperor," "The Hanged Man," and "Temperance," etc.

Could Roselle have been a 'senior'…I wonder if he was also a fellow countryman of mine… Zhou Mingrui mumbled to himself subconsciously.

Before he could finish looking at the opened cards on the table, the woman who claimed to have accurate divinations had already reached out her hands to gather all of the cards together. She stacked them into a deck and pushed it in front of him.

"Shuffle the cards first and cut the deck," the circus fortune-teller said in a muted voice.

"Me? Shuffle?" Zhou Mingrui asked reflexively.

The yellow and red paint on the fortune-teller's face squirmed together as she revealed a slight smile, saying, "Of course, everyone's destiny can only be unraveled by themselves. I only serve as a reader of it."

Zhou Mingrui immediately questioned her warily, "This reading does not require additional fees, right?"

As a keyboard folklorist, I've already seen too many of such tricks!

The fortune-teller was visibly taken aback before finally saying muffledly, "It's free."

Zhou Mingrui, relieved, stuffed the revolver further back into his pocket. Thereafter, he calmly reached out his two hands to shuffle and cut the deck skillfully.

"It's done." He placed the already shuffled tarot cards in the middle of the table.

The fortune-teller clasped the cards with both her hands and carefully looked at cards for a while. Then, she suddenly opened her mouth and said, "I'm sorry, I forgot to ask, but what would you like to ask about?"

Back when he was wooing his first love, Zhou Mingrui had also done research on tarot cards. He asked unhesitatingly, "Past, present, and future."

This was a type of divination as part of tarot card interpretation—three cards when opened sequentially symbolized one's past, present, and future.

The fortune-teller nodded first, then curled her lips to reveal a smile and said, "Then please reshuffle the deck. You can only truly get the cards you want if you know what you would like to ask about."

Were you fooling me just now? Do you have to be this petty? Didn't I only ask a few times if this would be a free service? Zhou Mingrui's cheeks twitched a little. He took a deep breath and took the tarot deck back to reshuffle and cut it.

"There won't be any problems this time, right?" He placed the already cut deck back onto the table.

"No problem." The fortune-teller reached out her fingers and picked a card from the top of the deck. Then she placed it on the left side of Zhou Mingrui. Her voice was going lower and lower as she spoke, "This card symbolizes your past."

"This card symbolize your present." The fortune-teller placed the second card right in front of Zhou Mingrui.

Then, she picked the third card and put it on the right side of Zhou Mingrui.

"This card symbolizes the future."

"Alright, which card would you like to see first?" The fortune-teller raised her head up after completing her placement of the cards and gazed deeply at Zhou Mingrui with her grayish-blue eyes.

"I'll have a look at the 'present' first," Zhou Mingrui said after giving it some thought.

The fortune-teller nodded slowly and flipped over the tarot card that was directly in front of Zhou Mingrui.

A colorfully dressed character was depicted on this card, wearing splendid headgear with a stick over his shoulder. There was a bindle hanging on the end of the stick and a puppy was following behind him. It was numbered "0."

"The Fool," the fortune-teller lightly read out the name of the card with her grayish-blue eyes affixed on Zhou Mingrui.

The Fool? The "0" card of tarot? A start? A fresh beginning with all kinds of possibilities? Zhou Mingrui was not even considered an amateur enthusiast of tarot, so he could only make a rough interpretation based on his own impressions of tarot.

Just as the fortune-teller was about to say something, the cloth curtains of the tent was suddenly lifted open. The ray of sunlight that shone in was so blinding that it caused the back-facing Zhou Mingrui to instinctively narrow his eyes.

"Why are you impersonating me again! It's my job to handle the divination for people!" a woman's voice growled angrily. "Return to your post quickly! You must remember that you're just an animal trainer!"

An animal trainer? Zhou Mingrui's eyes had already adapted to the light by now. He saw a similar-looking woman who was also wearing a sharp pointy hat in a black dress, with her face painted in red and yellow as well. The only difference was that she was taller and had a slimmer physique.

The woman who was seating in front of him immediately stood up and said disgruntledly, "Don't mind this, it's just that I like doing this. But I have to say, my divination and interpretation can be really accurate sometimes. I'm serious…”

She spoke and lifted up her dress to go around from the side of the table before quickly trotting away from the tent.

"Sir, would you like me to interpret your cards for you?" the real fortune-teller looked at Zhou Mingrui and asked with a smile.

Zhou Mingrui's lips twitched and asked her sincerely, "Is it free?"

“…No," the real fortune-teller answered.

"Then forget it." Zhou Mingrui pulled his hands back and put them into his pockets. He clutched his revolver and money before stooping again to exit the tent.

Damn! He actually got an animal trainer to be his fortune-teller?

Was an animal trainer who didn't want to be a fortune-teller not a good clown?

Zhou Mingrui very quickly put this matter behind him. He spent seven pence at the 'Lettuce and Meat' market for a pound of not-so-great mutton. Then, he also bought some tender broad beans, cabbage, onions, potatoes, and other items. Together with the bread that he bought earlier, he spent a total of 25 copper pennies, which converted to two soli and one pence.

"There is really not enough to go around for spending. Poor Benson…” Not only had Zhou Mingrui spent the two notes that he had brought with him, but it was also necessary for him top it up with the one penny he had in his pocket.

He just sighed and did not think further about it as he hurried back home.

With the staple food, he could now carry out the luck enhancement ritual!

…

After the second-floor tenants gradually left, Zhou Mingrui was still in no hurry to carry out the ritual. Instead, he translated the "Blessings Stem From The Immortal Lord of Heaven and Earth" and related phrases into the ancient Feysac language, as well as the Loen language. He was intending to try the ritual again the next day in those local languages if the original incantation did not take effect!

After all, he had to take into consideration the differences between the two worlds. In Rome, do as the Romans do!

As for translating it into an ancient ritual prayer that used the dedicated Hermes language, Zhou Mingrui had a difficult time completing it due to his lack of vocabulary.

After readying everything, he finally took out the four loaves of rye bread. He placed one in the corner where the coal stove was originally, one at the bottom inner side of the dress mirror, one at the top of the cupboard where two walls met, and one at the right side of the study table where miscellaneous items were kept.

With a deep breath, Zhou Mingrui came to the center of the room and spent a few minutes to calm himself. Then, he took a solemn step forward and went in a counter-clockwise direction in the shape of a square.

When he took the first step, he chanted in a low whisper, "Blessings Stem From The Immortal Lord of Heaven and Earth."

The second step, he sincerely chanted, "Blessings Stem From The Sky Lord of Heaven and Earth."

The third step, Zhou Mingrui breathed out a whisper. "Blessings Stem From The Exalted Thearch of Heaven and Earth."

At the fourth step, he spat out a foul breath and meditated in concentration. "Blessings Stem From The Celestial Worthy of Heaven and Earth."

When he returned back to the original spot, Zhou Mingrui closed his eyes and waited in his place for an outcome. He had some anticipation in him, some unease, some hope, and some fear.

Could he make it back?

Was there going to be any effect?

Could there be some unexpected situation?

The unknown in front of him was tainted with the crimson light of hope. Zhou Mingrui's thoughts were swirling in his head and was finding it difficult to quell it.

It was at this time that he suddenly felt the surrounding air seem to stop, becoming thick and mysterious.

Immediately after, a low whisper could be heard beside his ears that sounded at times real, at times sharp, at times imaginary, at times alluring, at times maniacal, and at times crazy.

He clearly did not understand the murmuring that went on, but Zhou Mingrui still couldn't help himself from wanting to listen to it and distinguish what it was saying.

His head was in pain again. It was so painful that it felt like someone had stuck a steel drill rod into it.

Zhou Mingrui only felt like his head was going to explode. His thoughts were filled with a psychedelic of colors.

He knew that something was wrong and tried to open his eyes. However, he wasn't even able to complete such a simple action.

His entire body was getting tighter and tighter and it felt like he could just break apart at any time. At this time, a self-mocking thought came up in

Zhou Mingrui's mind:

"If you didn't seek death, you wouldn't die…”

He could no longer bear with it. Just as his mind was going to break, the murmuring of voices faded away and his surroundings became very quiet. The mood was an erratic one.

It was not only the mood; Zhou Mingrui felt his own body going through the same sensations as well.

He tried once more to open his eyes, an extremely easy task this time.

A gray fog appeared over his eyes—haziness, vague, and endless.

"What's with this situation?" Zhou Mingrui suddenly looked around him and then lowered his head down to discover that he was floating at the edge of an endless fog.

The fog was flowing like water and was dotted with a lot of crimson 'stars.' Some of them were enormous while others were tiny. There was a sense of them being hidden in the deep depths, while others floated over the surface of this water-like fog.

Looking at the seemingly holographic sight, Zhou Mingrui reached out his right hand in a half-confused, half-exploring manner to try to touch the crimson 'star' that was seemingly floating on the surface. He was trying to find a way to leave this place.

When his hand touched the surface of that star, a water mark suddenly appeared from within his body and agitated the stars into a "crimson" burst. It looked like a dreamlike burning of flames.

Zhou Mingrui got a fright from it. He retracted his right hand in a panic, but accidentally touched yet another crimson star.

As a result, this star burst with splendid light as well.

In turn, Zhou Mingrui felt his mind empty and his spirit dissipated.

…

In the Loen Kingdom's capital, Backlund. Inside a luxurious looking villa at the royal district.

Audrey Hall sat in front of a dresser. The markings on it were antiquated and there was a cracked bronze mirror on the surface.

"Mirror, mirror, awaken…

"In the name of the Hall family, I command you to awaken!"

…

She switched between many different sayings, but there was no reaction from the mirror at all.

After more than 10 minutes, she finally chose to give up and pouted her lips in grievance. She said in a soft murmur, "Father was indeed lying to me. He always tells me that this mirror was the treasure of the Roman Empire's Dark Emperor, and that it is an extraordinary item…”

Her voice trailed off. The bronze mirror which rested on the dresser suddenly glowed with a crimson light that shrouded her completely.

…

In the Sonia Sea, a three-masted sailboat that looked like an obvious relic was navigating through a storm.

Alger Wilson stood on deck, his body undulating with the currents at sea, maintaining his balance easily.

He wore a robe embroidered with lightning patterns, and in his hand was a quirky-shaped glass bottle. Bubbles billowed inside the bottle at times, frost turned into snow at times, and signs of gusting wind could be seen at times.

"Still short on the Ghost Shark's blood…" Alger murmured.

Then at this moment, a crimson burst appeared in the space between the glass bottle and the surface of his palm. In an instant, it enveloped the surroundings as well.

…

In the fog of gray mist, Audrey Hall regained her sight. She started reckoning the situation in a state of horror and confusion when she noticed the blurry image of a man on the opposite side of her doing the same as well.

Immediately after, the both of them discovered another mystery person standing not far from them who was shrouded in a gray mist.

The 'mysterious person' was none other than Zhou Mingrui. He was similarly dumbfounded.

"Sir, where is this?"

Audrey and Alger were startled at first, falling silent in the process. Then, they immediately started speaking in unison.

"What are you planning on doing?"

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CHAPTER 6
BEYONDER

Not only did they speak the same Loen language, they also shared the same grim and tense vibes.

Where am I? What do I plan to do here? I would like to know too… Calming himself down, Zhou Mingrui silently repeated the questions posed by the two.

What left the deepest impression on him were neither the sentences formed by words nor the meanings behind them, but the display of bewilderment, vigilance, panic, and reverence by the couple!

For some baffling reason, two people had been mysteriously dragged into this world surrounded by gray fog. As the perpetrator, Zhou Mingrui was already feeling abnormally dumbfounded and startled, let alone the couple who was pulled into this mess completely passively!

For them, such events and encounters might already be beyond their imaginations, right?

Momentarily, Zhou Mingrui thought of two options: The first option was feigning victimhood to hide his true identity, and in turn gain a considerable amount of trust. He could then take a wait-and-see approach and take advantage of his circumstances where necessary. The other option was to maintain his mysterious identity in the eyes of the couple. He could then affect the subsequent development while gleaning valuable information from them.

Without the luxury of time to deliberate over the situation, he grasped hold of the thought that flashed across his mind. He made an immediate decision to try out the second idea.

Exploit the psychological state of the others to gain the greatest advantage for himself!

After a few seconds of silence in the fog, Zhou Mingrui chuckled. With a low but not heavy tone, he calmly spoke as though he was replying to the polite greetings from the visitors, "An attempt."

An attempt… an attempt? Audrey Hall looked at the mysterious guy veiled in the grayish-white fog, and the only thought was that whatever was happening was absurd, funny, horrifying, and weird.

She was at the dressing table inside her bedroom only moments ago. But just by turning around, she had "come" into this place that was filled with gray fog!

How inconceivable!

Audrey took a breath, revealing an impeccable, courteous smile. She asked in a somewhat perturbed way, "Sir, is the attempt over? Might you permit our return?"

Alger Wilson also had the intentions to probe Zhou Mingrui in a similar fashion, but his rich experience made him statelier. He held back his impulse and only took on the role of a silent onlooker.

Zhou Mingrui looked at the questioner. Looking through the hazy mist, he could roughly see the silhouette of the person in question. It was a tall girl with smooth blond hair, but her exact countenance could not be seen clearly.

He did not rush to reply the girl's question but turned around to look at the man. He had messy dark-blue hair, as well as a medium stature that was not

considered stout.

Zhou Mingrui suddenly realized something. Once he became stronger or had a deeper understanding of the foggy world, perhaps it was possible for him to see through the fog and discern the girl and the man.

In this situation, they are the visitors, and I'm the master!

After changing his mindset, Zhou Mingrui instantly noticed details that he had neglected earlier on.

The girl with a melodious voice and the mature, withdrawn man both looked considerably incorporeal. Tainted by a faint crimson red, they resembled a projected image of the two crimson red "stars" beyond the gray fog.

This projection was based on the connection between the crimson red and himself, an intangible connection that only he himself could realistically grasp hold of.

The projection would disappear once the connection was cut, and the couple would then return… Zhou Mingrui nodded mildly and looked at the blond, chuckling. "Of course, if you make a formal request, you can return this very moment."

When she did not identify any ill intention from his tone, Audrey heaved a sigh of relief. She believed that since a gentleman who was capable of such miraculous things had given his word, he would definitely abide by it stringently.

With her mind somewhat mollified, she surprisingly was in no hurry to request her leave. She rolled her virid eyes left and right, which sparkled with an abnormal radiance.

She said in an anxious, anticipative and tempted manner, "This is such a wonderful experience… Yes, I have always been hoping that something like

this would happen. I mean—I like mysteries and supernatural miracles. No, my point is—what I mean is that, Sir, what can I do to become a Beyonder?"

She got more excited as she spoke, so much so she was fumbling over her words. The dream that sprouted in her as a result of listening to thrilling fantasies as told by her elders finally saw the possibility of being materialized.

However, with just a few words, she had already forgotten all her previous fears and horrors.

Good question! I would also like to know the answer… Zhou Mingrui complained inwardly.

He started to ponder on an answer to the question to maintain his unfathomable image.

At the same time, he felt that it was quite unbecoming of him to talk while standing. Shouldn't he be in a palace, sitting at the head of a long table, and on a mysterious high-back chair engraved with ancient patterns, while silently observing his visitors?

As soon as this thought surfaced, the gray fog started to churn, giving both Audrey and Alger a shock.

In an instant, they saw a number of towering stone pillars around them. Above them was a vast dome that encapsulated them.

This entire edifice looked magnificent, grand and lofty, just like a legendary palace for giants.

Directly under the dome where the gray fog gathered, a long, bronze table appeared with ten high-back chairs on either side in a symmetrical arrangement, along with a chair on the other two ends of the long table The

back of each chair dazzled and shone faintly with crimson red, drawing the outlines of weird constellations that differed from reality.

Audrey and Alger sat face-to-face, sitting next to the Seat of Honor.

The girl looked to her sides, and could not help but mumble, "How fascinating…”

It is certainly fascinating… Zhou Mingrui extended his right hand and caressed the edge of the bronze table a little while maintaining an unperturbed expression.

Alger inspected the surroundings, and after a few seconds of silence, he suddenly opened his mouth, and answered Audrey's question in place of Zhou Mingrui.

"Are you a Loen?

"If you want to become a Beyonder, join the Churches of either the Evernight Goddess, the Lord of Storms, or the God of Steam and Machinery.

"The majority of us will not meet a Beyonder our entire lives. This has caused churches, and even some clergies within some of the biggest churches, to suspect the same. While this is the case, I am certain to tell you that Beyonders still exist in courts, tribunals, and execution agencies. They are still fighting against the dangers that grow in the dark, only that their numbers are much fewer as compared to before and during the early days of the Iron Age."

Zhou Mingrui listened attentively, but he tried his best to present himself as paying little attention to Alger's words, much like how he was listening to kids telling stories.

Relying on Klein's fragmented general knowledge of history, Zhou Mingrui knew clearly that the "Iron Age" referred to the current epoch, which was

the Fifth Epoch that began 1349 years ago.

Audrey silently listened to Alger finish his sentence before sighing.

"Mister, I know all about what you just said; I even know more than that, including the Nighthawks, the Mandated Punishers, and the Machinery Hivemind, but I don't want to lose my freedom."

Alger gave a low-sounding laugh, and said vaguely, "You can't become a Beyonder without sacrifices. If you don't consider joining churches and accepting their given challenges, you can only seek the royal families and the few nobles with family histories of more than a thousand years. If not, you can rely on your luck to search for clandestine evil organizations."

Audrey puffed her cheeks subconsciously and looked around in a fluster. After confirming that both the "mysterious man" and Audrey did not notice her tic, she pressed, "Are there no other solutions?"

Alger sank into silence. About half a minute later, he turned around to look at the "mysterious man" who was watching the two of them in silence.

Realizing that Zhou Mingrui had no plans to make any comment, he looked back at Audrey and said with deliberation, "I have two sets of Sequence 9 Potion formulas."

Sequence 9? Zhou Mingrui muttered to himself.

"Really? Which two sets?" Audrey clearly knew what the Sequence 9 Potion formulas meant.

Alger leaned back slightly, and replied unhurriedly, "As you know, humanity can only depend on potions to become real Beyonders, while the names of potions come from the 'Blasphemy Slate.' After constant translations into Jotun [1] , Elvish, ancient and modern Hermes, and ancient Feysac, they have undergone changes to match the day and age of that era.

The essence is not in their names, but whether they portray the 'core characteristics' of the potions.

"I have a Sequence 9 Potion named 'Sailor.' It enables you to have excellent balancing capabilities. Even if you were on a boat in a rainstorm, you will be able to walk about freely as though you were on land. You will also gain immense strength and illusory scales under your skin. They will enable you to swim like a fish and be difficult to catch. You will move agilely underwater just like marine animals. Even without any equipment, you will be able to easily submerge underwater for at least ten minutes."

"Sounds great… the 'Keepers of the Seas' from the Lord of Storms?"

"It was called by that name in the past." Alger did not pause and continued. "The second set of Sequence 9 Potions is called 'Spectator,' although I am not sure what it was called in the past. This set of potions enables you to have an exceptionally sharp mind with acute observational abilities. I believe you can understand by what 'spectator' means from watching operas and plays. Just like an audience, spectators judge the 'actors' in the secular world, catching a glimpse of the real thoughts of them through their emotions, conduct, and mantras."

At this point, Alger emphasized, "You must remember, regardless of whether you are at an extravagant banquet or a crowded street, spectators can only be spectators forever."

Audrey's eyes shone as she listened, and spoke after a long while, "Why? Alright, this is a follow-up question. I-I think I have fallen in love with this feeling—of being a 'spectator.' How can I get this potion's formula? What can I use to trade with you for it?"

Alger looked like he was already prepared as he said in a deep voice, "The blood of Ghost Sharks, at least 100 milliliters of it."

Audrey nodded her head excitedly, but subsequently asked worriedly, "If I can get it—and I'm saying if—how do I hand it to you? How can you

promise me that you can give the potion's formula to me in return for the Ghost Shark's blood, as well as the authenticity of the formula?"

Alger said calmly, "I'll give you an address. I'll mail the formula to you, or tell you directly here, once I receive the blood of the Ghost Shark."

"As for promises, I think that both you and I can feel rest assured under the witness of the mysterious sir."

As he said this, he swept his eyes towards Zhou Mingrui who was sitting up straight at the Seat of Honor.

"Sir, the fact that you brought us here shows that you have tremendous strength unimaginable to us. Neither one of us would dare violate a promise with you as witness."

"That's right!" Audrey's eyes sparkled and agreed with excitement.

From her perspective, the mysterious gentleman who had unimaginable abilities was definitely an "authoritative" witness.

How could I or the guy opposite me dare trick him!

Audrey half-turned her body and looked at Zhou Mingrui earnestly.

"Sir, please be the witness of our trade."

At that moment, she then realized that she was all too impolite, having forgotten all along to ask a particular question. She asked hurriedly, "Sir, how should we address you?"

Alger nodded slightly, and echoed the same question in a serious manner, "Sir, how should we address you?"

Zhou Mingrui was taken aback. He gently rapped his fingers on the bronze table. The contents of the earlier divination flashed across his mind

suddenly.

He leaned back, withdrew his right hand, and crossed his ten fingers, placing them below his chin. He gave the duo a faint smile.

"You can address me as…”

Upon saying this, he paused for a moment. He said amiably and calmly, "The Fool."

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CHAPTER 7
CODE NAMES

"You can address me as The Fool."

The simple answer soon emanated through the grand hall and dissipated into the fog. However, the voice kept resonating in Audrey's and Alger's hearts, stirring up one ripple after another.

They never expected such a designation, but they felt that he was deserving of it. The designation perfectly embodied his image as someone mysterious, powerful, and bizarre!

After a few seconds of silence, Audrey stood up, held up her skirt slightly and bent her knees, curtseying to Zhou Mingrui.

"Honorable Mr. Fool, would you please permit me to take the liberty of requesting you to be the witness of our trade?"

"It's nothing." Zhou Mingrui's mind whirred as he answered in a way that matched his status.

"It's our honor, Mr. Fool." Alger stood up as well. He bent his back slightly with his right palm over his chest.

Zhou Mingrui lowered his right palm and smiled.

"Continue, the both of you."

Alger nodded and sat back down before looking at Audrey.

"If you can obtain the Ghost Shark's blood, get someone to send it to the Warrior & Sea Bar at Pelican Street, in the White Rose Borough of Pritz Harbor. Tell the boss, Williams, that it's what the 'Captain' wants.

"Once I acknowledge receipt, will you be giving me an address to mail the potion formula to or do you want me to tell it to you here directly?"

Audrey thought for a moment before saying with a smile, "I will choose the more secure method. Let's do it here, although it's a test of my memory."

Since Mr. Fool had agreed to bear witness for the trade, it also represented that there would be a similar 'Gathering' the next time.

With this in mind, she suddenly turned her head as she looked at Zhou Mingrui with sparkling eyes. With a tone of interest, she suggested, "Mr. Fool, would you mind making a few more 'attempts' like this?"

Alger listened to her suggestion calmly; he was tempted by the suggestion as well. He hurriedly echoed, "Mr. Fool, don't you find such 'Gatherings' interesting? Although your powers exceed our imaginations, there has to be certain domains that you don't understand or excel in. The person across me is obviously a young lady of lofty stature. I also have my unique set of experiences, insights, mediums, and resources. Perhaps there will come a day when both of us can help you complete something trivial that might be inconvenient for you."

From his point of view, the fact that he had been pulled into this space without any warning or any means to resist meant that the mysterious Mr. Fool was in control. Participating in the 'Gatherings' was not necessarily something he could refuse. Therefore, it was better to reap the benefits of this encounter as much as he could to make up for his passive and disadvantaged state.

The trio at the long table had different backgrounds, resources, information channels, and comprehension of the mystical domain. If they interacted and

enjoyed some limited cooperation, they could produce unpredictable and immeasurable effects!

The resource trade that had just been negotiated was one example. Another example would be if he wished to kill someone. He could easily request the Gathering's members who did not appear to be related to him both on the surface and in reality for help. He could perfectly misdirect any investigators.

A young lady of lofty stature… Was my behavior and accent that obvious? Audrey stared blankly, mouth slightly agape, but she soon jolted back to her senses and nodded her head without any hesitation.

"Mr. Fool, I think it's a very good suggestion. As long as this Gathering becomes regular, you can totally leave certain things that are inconvenient for you to us. Of course, it has to be something within our capacities."

From the moment he heard the suggestion, Zhou Mingrui was already weighing the pros and cons. More gatherings definitely allowed him to gain more knowledge of the secrets of the Beyonders or other mysteries, a boon for his transmigration back. For example, it was likely that the potion formula would appear at the next gathering because of the 'spectators.' Similarly, the information he gained was bound to be helpful for his present life.

However, more gatherings meant it was easier to expose himself!

Indeed, regardless of the world, there is no such thing as a free lunch… Zhou Mingrui extended his right hand again as he rapped the side of the long table with his finger gently.

Considering the fact that he was in control of the gathering's summoning and dismissal, any threat of exposure was within the confines of his control. The pros clearly exceeded the cons, so Zhou Mingrui rapidly made a decision.

He stopped his rapping as he smiled at the anticipative and perturbed gazes of the duo.

"I'm a person who likes a fair and equal exchange.

"Your help will not go unrewarded.

"Every Monday at three in the afternoon, try your best to be alone. After I make a few more attempts and figure out certain things, perhaps you can apply for a leave of absence ahead of time. You will no longer need to worry about being in inappropriate situations."

This was a form of agreement to Alger's and Audrey's suggestions.

Audrey had just turned seventeen. Having been taken care of her entire life, she had the character of a young girl. Therefore, she could not help but clench her fist and gradually pump it in front of her chest when she heard The Fool's reply.

Without waiting for Alger to say a word, Audrey said in excitement, her eyes glowing, "Then, shall we give ourselves code names? After all, we can't use our real names for conversation."

Although I might not be able to deceive Mr. Fool regarding my true identity, the person opposite me poses some danger. I must not let him know who I am!

"Good idea," answered Zhou Mingrui in a simple and relaxed manner.

Audrey's mind immediately began whirring as she aired her thoughts as they came to her.

"You are Mr. Fool which is derived from tarot cards. Then, as a fixed, long-term, and secretive 'Gathering,' we should be uniform in our designations. Yes, I'll also choose one from the tarot cards."

Her tone slowly turned joyous.

"I've decided. My designation shall be 'Justice!'"

It was one of the twenty-two Major Arcana tarot cards.

"What about you, Mister?" Audrey cheekily smiled at her 'partner' sitting across her.

Alger frowned slightly before relaxing it immediately.

"The Hanged Man."

It was another Major Arcana card.

"Alright, then we can be considered as the founding members of the Tarot Club!" Audrey was the first to blurt it out happily, only to look fearfully at the fog-concealed Zhou Mingrui. "Will that be alright, Mr. Fool?"

Zhou Mingrui shook his head in amusement.

"You can decide on such trivial matters by yourselves."

"Thank you!" Audrey was clearly thrilled.

Following that, she looked at Alger.

"Mr. Hanged Man, can you repeat the address again once more? I'm afraid that my memories will fail me."

"No problem." Alger was very pleased with Audrey's seriousness as he repeated the address once more.

After repeating it to herself silently thrice, Audrey said again in excitement, "I heard that tarot cards were invented by Emperor Roselle as a game. In fact, doesn't it come equipped with the power to divine the future?"

"No. Most of the time, divination stems from one's self. Everyone has something spiritual about themselves, allowing them to attune to the spiritual world and connect to information about themselves at an even higher level. However, ordinary folks are unable to notice this, much less be able to interpret the 'signs' they receive. This information will present itself with the help of divination tools. Let me raise a simple example, dreams and dream interpreters." Alger took a glance at Zhou Mingrui and seeing no response from him, he refuted Audrey's claim. "Tarot cards are, in fact, such a tool. It uses more symbolism and more logical elements to help us in conveniently and accurately interpreting the signs."

Although Zhou Mingrui appeared indifferent, he was actually listening very carefully. It was only at this point that his empty mind slowly became heavy as his head began to feel a throbbing pain.

"Got it." Audrey nodded in agreement. Following that, she emphasized, "That's not what I meant. I'm not doubting the tarot cards, but I heard that Emperor Roselle had actually created another set of cards, secret and mysterious ones. They were paper cards which symbolized a particular unknown power. There was a total of twenty-two cards that he completed. Later on in life, he referenced them to create the twenty-two Major Arcana tarot cards which are used as a gaming tool. Was what I said correct?"

She looked at Zhou Mingrui as though she was attempting to get an answer from the mysterious Mr. Fool.

All Zhou Mingrui did was smile without saying a word. He cast his gaze at The Hanged Man as though he was putting him to the test.

Alger subconsciously straightened his back and said in a deep voice, "That's right. It is said that Emperor Roselle had seen the Blasphemy Slate and that set of paper cards contain the profound mysteries of the twenty-two paths of the divine."

"Twenty-two paths of the divine…” repeated Audrey with a longing tone.

At that moment, Zhou Mingrui's headache intensified. He felt that his invisible connection with the crimson stars and grayish-white fog was beginning to falter.

"Alright, that will be all for today's gathering," he said in a deep voice after making the decision immediately.

"By your will." Alger bowed his head respectfully.

"By your will." Audrey mimicked The Hanged Man.

She still had many questions and thoughts; thus, she was unwilling to have it end so soon.

As Zhou Mingrui severed the connection, he said with a smile, "Let us look forward to the next gathering."

The 'stars' brightened once more as the crimson light receded like water. Just as Audrey and Alger heard Mr. Fool's words, their figures turned into a blur as they phased away.

In a second, the 'projection' shattered as the gray fog restored its silence.

As for Zhou Mingrui, he felt himself turning heavy rapidly. His surroundings turned fleeting as his eyes met darkness before changing into dazzling sunlight.

He was still standing in the middle of his apartment.

"It was like a dream… What the heck was that foggy world… Who or what sort of power created the changes that just happened…" Zhou Mingrui sighed softly. He was completely puzzled as he walked towards the study desk as though his legs were filled with lead.

He picked up the pocket watch he placed outside to determine how much time had passed.

"Time flowed at the same pace." Zhou Mingrui made a rough judgment.

After putting down his pocket watch, he found himself unable to endure the splitting headache any further. He sat on the chair and lowered his head, using his left thumb and middle finger to massage his temples.

After a long while, he suddenly let out a sigh and said in Mandarin, "From the looks of it, I won't be able to return any time soon…”

Only the clueless could be fearless. After witnessing such a fascinating event and learning the situation regarding Beyonders and the mysterious world, Zhou Mingrui no longer dared to rashly try the luck enhancement ritual using ancient Feysac or Loen language.

Who knew what other kinds of situation would happen. Perhaps, it would be more bizarre, horrifying, or even a living hell!

"At the very least, I should attempt only when I have a deep mastery of mysticism," thought Zhou Mingrui helplessly.

Thankfully, the so-called Gathering could provide him with help.

After another bout of silence, he muttered to himself with a tone of dismay, disappointment, agony, and grief, "From this moment forth, I'm Klein."

…

Klein tried his best to refocus his solutions and plans so as to purge the negative emotions in him.

Perhaps, he could learn the potion formula for 'Spectator' from the side…

The 'Gathering' that just happened sure is fascinating. People who reside in different places across the world can reduce hundreds of kilometers to just mere inches and discuss face-to-face while supplying each other's needs. Uh, speaking of which, this does sound a little familiar…

Klein was stunned for a few seconds before he burst out in laughter. Pressing against his temple, he jested under his breath, "Wasn't that a social networking platform?"

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CHAPTER 8
A NEW ERA

Whoosh!

Howling wind accompanied a downpour. The three-mast sailboat was tossed around by the crests and troughs of the incoming waves, as if it was being toyed by a giant.

The crimson glow in Alger Wilson's eyes faded. He found himself still remaining on the deck and nothing appeared to have changed.

Almost immediately, the quirky-shaped glass bottle in his palm shattered and the frost within melted into the rain. In seconds, there were no longer any traces left that suggested the existence of the wondrous antique.

A hexagonal crystal-like snowflake emerged on Alger's palm. It then faded rapidly until it was seemingly absorbed by the flesh, vanishing completely in the process. Alger nodded his head in a hardly noticeable manner, as if he was thinking about something. He remained still and silent for a full five minutes.

He turned around and headed for the cabin. As he was about to enter, a man who wore a similar robe embroidered with lightning patterns emerged from inside.

This man, who had soft blond hair, paused and looked at Alger. He held his right fist to his chest and said, "May the Storm be with you."

Alger replied with the same words and gesture. There were no emotions on his rough face which had a well-defined structure.

Alger entered the cabin after the greeting and proceeded to the captain's cabin situated at the far end of the corridor.

Surprisingly, he did not encounter any sailors on the way. The whole place was as quiet as a graveyard.

Behind the door to the captain's cabin, a soft brown carpet overlaid the floor. A bookshelf and a wine rack took the opposite side walls of the room. The books with their yellowish covers and wine bottles with their dark red color looked peculiar under the flickering candlelight.

On the desk with the candle, there was a bottle of ink, a quill, a pair of black metallic telescope, and a sextant made of brass.

Behind the desk sat a pale middle-aged man wearing a captain's hat which had a skull on it. As Alger approached him, he said menacingly, "I will not give in!"

"I believe you can do it," Alger said calmly, so calm that it felt like he was commenting on the weather.

"You…” The man seemed to be stunned by the unexpected answer.

At this very moment, Alger leaned forward slightly and suddenly dashed across the room until they were only separated by the desk.

Pa!

Alger tightened his shoulder and reached out his right hand to choke the man.

Illusory fish scales appeared on the back of his hand as he crazily mustered more strength to choke the man, giving him no time to respond.

Crack!

Amid the crisp cracking sound, the man's eyes widened as his body was lifted up.

His legs twitched furiously before they soon became motionless. His pupils began to widen as he stared aimlessly. There was a stench from between his legs as his pants gradually turned moist.

While lifting the man, Alger lowered his back and strode toward the wall.

Bang! He used the man as a shield and smashed forward at the wall. His extremely muscular arm was monstrous.

A hole cracked open in the wooden wall, and rain poured in, accompanied by the scent of the ocean.

Alger flung the man out of the cabin, straight into the giant waves that resembled mountains.

The wind continued to howl in the dark as almighty nature devoured everything.

Alger took out a white handkerchief and wiped his right hand carefully before throwing it into the sea as well.

He stepped back and waited patiently for company.

In less than ten seconds, the blond man from before rushed in and asked, "What happened?"

"The 'captain' has escaped," Alger answered in an annoyed manner as he panted. "I didn't know he still had some of his Beyonder powers."

"Damn it!" the blond man cursed softly.

He went up to the opening and stared into the distance. However, nothing was visible except for the waves and the rain.

"Forget it, he was just extra loot," the blond man said, waving his arm, "We will still be rewarded for finding this ghost ship from the Tudor Era."

Even if he was a Keeper of the Sea, he would not have hastily dived into the sea under this weather condition.

"The 'captain' will not be able to survive much longer if the storm continues." Alger said, as he nodded in approval. The wooden wall was repairing itself at a discernible rate.

He gazed at the wall and turned his head subconsciously towards the rudder and the sail.

He was perfectly aware of what was going on behind all the wooden planks.

The chief mate, the second mate, the crew, and the sailors were not present. There was no living person on board!

Amidst all the emptiness, the rudder and the sail moved eerily by themselves.

Alger again pictured "The Fool" who was covered in grayish-white fog and sighed.

He turned back and looked outside at the mighty waves and spoke as though in a reverie while filled with anticipation and awe, "A new era has begun…”

…

Empress Borough, Backlund, capital of the Loen Kingdom.

Audrey Hall pinched her cheeks in disbelief of her encounter a while ago.

On the dressing table in front of her, the old bronze mirror had shattered into pieces.

Audrey cast her gaze downwards and saw the swirling "crimson" on the back of her hand; it was like a tattoo depicting a star.

The "crimson" gradually faded and disappeared into her skin.

Only at this point in time was Audrey certain that it was not a dream.

Her eyes twinkled as she grinned. She could not help but stand up before bending down to lift up the hem of her dress.

She curtseyed towards thin air and started dancing lively. It was the "Ancient Elf Dance, "the most popular dance among royalty at the moment.

She had a bright smile on her face as she moved about gracefully.

Knock! Knock! Someone suddenly knocked at her bedroom door.

"Who is it?" Audrey immediately stopped her dance and asked as she tidied her dress to look more elegant.

"My Lady, may I come in? You should start to prepare for the ceremony," Audrey's maidservant asked from outside the door.

Audrey looked into a mirror on the dressing table and quickly wiped the smile from her face, leaving only a tiny hint of a smile.

She responded gently after she had ensured everything was presentable, "Come in."

The doorknob turned and Annie, her maidservant, pushed in.

"Oh, it cracked…” Annie said as she instantly saw the outcome of the old bronze mirror.

Audrey blinked and said slowly, "Erm, Yes! Susie was here just now. I am sure you know she likes to wreak havoc!"

Susie was a golden retriever that was not so much of a purebred. It was a gift given to her father, Count Hall, when he bought a foxhound. Nevertheless, Audrey adored it.

"You should train it well," Annie said, as she picked up the pieces of the bronze mirror adeptly and with care, lest it hurt her mistress.

As she finished tidying up, she asked Audrey with a smile, "Which dress do you want to put on?"

Audrey thought for a while and answered," I like the dress designed by Mrs. Guinea for my 17th birthday."

"No, you can't wear the same dress twice to a formal ceremony or others will gossip about and question the Hall family's financial ability," Annie said, shaking her head in disagreement.

"But I really like it!" Audrey insisted in a gentle manner.

"You can wear it at home or when you attend an event that isn't so formal," Annie said firmly, suggesting that it was not negotiable.

"Then it will have to be the one with the lotus design along the sleeves given by Mr. Sades two days ago," Audrey said as she drew in a gasp inconspicuously, maintaining her sweet smile.

"You always have such a good taste," Annie said as she stepped back and shouted towards the door, "The sixth dressing room! Ah, forget it, I shall fetch it myself."

Maidservants began to work. The dress, accessories, footwear, hat, makeup, and hairstyle—everything had to be taken care of.

When it was almost ready, Count Hall appeared at the door wearing a dark brown waistcoat.

He had a hat sharing the same color as his clothes and a nice mustache. His blue eyes were filled with joy, but his loosening muscles, widening waist, and wrinkles were obviously destroying his handsome youth.

"The brightest jewel of Backlund, it is time for our departure," Count Hall said, knocking at the door twice.

"Father! Stop calling me that," Audrey protested as she got up with the help of the maidservants.

"Well then, it's time to set off, my beautiful little princess," Count Hall said as he bent his left arm, signaling Audrey to hold his arm.

Audrey shook her head slightly and said, "That is for my mother, Mrs. Hall, the Countess."

"Then this side," Count Hall bent his right arm with a smile and said, "This is for you, my greatest pride."

…

The Royal Navy base, Pritz Harbor, Oak Island.

When Audrey took her father's arm and walked down the carriage, she was suddenly shocked by the juggernaut in front of her.

In the military port not far away, there was a huge ship shimmering with metallic reflections. It did not have a sail, leaving only an observatory deck, two towering chimneys, and two turrets at the ends of the ship.

It was so majestic and large that the fleet of sails nearby were like newborn dwarfs clustering around a giant.

"Holy Lord of Storms…”

"Oh, m'lord."

"An ironclad warship!"

…

Amidst the furore, Audrey was also shocked by this unprecedented miracle created by mankind. It was an ocean miracle that had never been seen before!

It took a while for the aristocrats, ministers, and Members of Parliament to compose themselves. Then, a black spot on the sky started to grow in size until it occupied a third of the sky and entered everyone's view. The atmosphere suddenly became solemn.

It was a gigantic flying machine with a beautiful streamlined design hovering in mid-air. The deep blue machine had airbags made of cotton which were supported by alloy structures that were strong but light. The alloy structure's bottom had openings mounted with machine guns, projectile launchers, and muzzles. The exaggerated humming noise from the ignition steam engine and the tail blades produced a symphony that left everyone amazed.

The King's family arrived on their airship, exuding a lofty and indisputable authority.

Two swords, each with a ruby crown at the handle, were pointing vertically down and reflected the sunlight on both sides of the cabin. They were the "Sword of Judgment" emblem which symbolized the Augustus family and has been passed down from the previous epoch.

Audrey was not yet eighteen, so she had not attended the "introductory ceremony," which was an event led by the Queen that marked one's debut into the Backlund social scene, to announce her adult status. Therefore, she could not be nearer to the airship and had to remain silent at the back to watch the entire event.

Nevertheless, it did not matter to her. In fact, she was relieved that she did not need to deal with the princes.

The 'miracle' that mankind used to conquer the sky touched down gently. The first ones to step down the stairs were the handsome young guards who wore red ceremonial uniforms with white trousers. Decorated with medals, they formed two lines with rifles in hand. They were awaiting the appearances of King George III, his queen, and the prince and princess.

Audrey was not new to meeting important people so she showed no interest at all. Instead, she had her attention on the two statue-like black-armored cavalry flanking the king.

In this era of iron, steam, and cannons, it was surprising that there was still someone who could bear wearing full armor.

The cold metallic luster and the dull black helmet conveyed solemnity and authority.

"Could they be the higher-order Disciplinary Paladins…" Audrey recalled snippets of a casual conversation among adults. She was curious but did not dare go close.

The ceremony commenced with the arrival of the king's family. The incumbent Prime Minister, Lord Aguesid Negan, went up to the front.

He was a member of the Conservative Party and the second non-aristocrat to become the Prime Minister till this very day. He was given the title of a Lord for his great contributions.

Of course, Audrey knew more. The main supporter of the Conservative Party was the present Duke of Negan, Pallas Negan, who was the brother of Aguesid!

Aguesid was a slender and almost bald fifty plus year old man with a sharp gaze. He surveyed the area before speaking.

"Ladies and Gentlemen, I believe you have witnessed this history-making ironclad warship. It has dimensions of 101 by 21 meters. It has an amazing port and starboard design. The armor belt is 457 millimeters thick. The displacement is 10060 tonnes. There are four 305-millimeter main cannons, six rapid-fire cannons, 12 six-pound cannons, 18 six-barrel machine guns, and four torpedo launchers. It can reach a speed of 16 knots!

"It will be the real hegemon! It will conquer the seas!"

The crowd was roused. The mere descriptions were enough to instill fearful images in them, let alone the fact that the actual thing was right in front of them.

Aguesid smiled and spoke a few more lines before saluting the king and requested, "Your Majesty, please give it a name!"

"Since it will set sail from Pritz Harbor, it should be named "The Pritz," George III responded. His expression showed his delight.

"The Pritz!"

"The Pritz!"

…

The words spread from the Navy Minister and the Admiral of the Royal Navy to all the soldiers and officers on the deck. They all exclaimed in unison, "The Pritz!"

George III ordered the Pritz to set sail for a trial in the midst of the gun salutes and the celebratory atmosphere.

Honk!

Thick smoke spewed out from the chimneys. The sound from the machinery could be heard faintly beneath the sound of the ship horn.

The juggernaut departed from the harbor. Everyone was shocked when the two main cannons at the ship's bow fired at an uninhabited island in its path.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

The ground shook as dust shot up into the sky. Shock waves spread out, producing waves in the sea.

Satisfied, Aguesid turned back to the crowd and announced, "From this day on, doomsday will fall on the seven pirates who call themselves Admirals and the four who call themselves Kings. They can only shiver in fear!

"It is the end of their era. Only the ironclad warship will roam the seas no matter whether the pirates have the powers of the Beyonders, ghost ships, or cursed ships."

Aguesid's chief secretary deliberately asked, "Can't they build their own ironclad warships?"

Some of the nobles and Members of Parliament nodded, feeling that such a possibility could not be eliminated.

Aguesid immediately smiled and shook his head slowly as he answered, "Impossible! It will never be possible! Building our ironclad warship required three big coal and steel amalgamators, a scale of more than twenty steel factories, 60 scientists and senior engineers from the Backlund Cannon Academy and Pritz Nautical Academy, two royal shipyards, almost hundred factories for spare parts, an Admiralty, a ship-building committee, a Cabinet, a determined king with excellent foresight, and a great country with an annual steel production of 12 million tonnes!

"The pirates will never achieve it."

Having said that, he paused and raised his arms before shouting in agitation, "Ladies and Gentlemen, the era of cannons and warships has dawned upon

us!"

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CHAPTER 9
THE NOTEBOOK

After half an hour of rest, Zhou Mingrui, who now viewed himself as Klein, finally recovered. In the meantime, he found that there were now four black dots on the back of his hand, which happened to form a small square.

These four black spots faded and disappeared quickly, but Klein knew that they were still hiding in his body, waiting to be awakened.

"Four spots forming a square; is it in correspondence with the four pieces of staple food at the four corners of the room? Does this mean that in the future, I don't need to prepare the food and can do the ritual and chants immediately?" Klein made a guess.

This might seem good, but the emergence of the spots was ominous, and "things" that one lacked understanding of were always scary.

The fact that those inexplicable Chinese Divinations from Earth could produce effects here, the strange transmigration in his sleep, the mysterious murmurings that almost drove him crazy during the ritual, and the mysterious and trippy gray world whose significance he had no idea of made Klein shiver in the hot weather of June.

"The oldest and strongest emotion of mankind is fear, and the oldest and strongest fear is the fear of the unknown." He recalled this saying as he was experiencing the fear of the unknown acutely.

There was in him an unprecedented and irresistible urge to make contact with the mysterious domain, to learn more, and to explore the unknown.

There was also a contradicting escape mentality within him compelling him to pretend nothing had happened.

Intense sunlight shone through the window onto the desk. It was as if there were grains of gold sprinkled on the desk. Klein gazed at the desk, feeling as though he had come into contact with warmth and hope.

He relaxed slightly, and a strong sense of fatigue washed over him.

His eyelids were as heavy as lead as they kept closing themselves. It must have been the combined effect of the sleepless night and the tiring encounter.

Klein shook his head and pushed himself up with the aid of the desk. He stumbled towards the double-decked bed, completely disregarding the rye bread placed at the four corners of the room. He fell asleep immediately after he lay down.

Groan! Groan!

Klein was woken up by hunger pangs. When he opened his eyes, he felt rejuvenated.

"There's still a slight headache." He rubbed his temples and sat up. He was so hungry that he could eat a horse!

He returned to the desk while straightening his shirt. He picked up the silver vine-leaf pocket watch.

Pa!

The pocket watch's lid sprang open and the second hand was ticking.

"Half past twelve. I slept for three hours…” Klein put the pocket watch back into his linen shirt pocket in while swallowing.

In the Northern Continent, there were 24 hours in a day, 60 minutes in an hour, and 60 seconds in a minute. Whether each second passed at the same rate here compared to Earth was unknown to Klein.

At this moment, he could not even think of terms such as mysticism, rituals or the grayish world. His mind was occupied by one thing—food!

He would leave the thinking to after his meals! Only then could he work!

Klein picked up the loaves of rye bread from the four corners and wiped off the minute specks of dust on it without any hesitation. He planned on making one of them his lunch.

He decided to dig into the offerings because he only had five pence with him and there was a tradition of eating the offerings back in his hometown. After all, there was not any observable change to the bread. It was better to be frugal.

Of course, the memory and habits left behind by the original Klein had also played a role.

It was a huge waste to use the expensive gas only to light up the room. So, Klein took out a furnace and boiled water with it after adding some coal. He paced around as he waited.

Anyone would choke eating those loaves of rye bread without water.

Yikes. Life with meat only for dinner is going to be dreadful… No, wait, this is already an exception. Melissa would only allow our meals to have meat twice a week if not for my upcoming interview, Klein thought, as he looked around, hungry. He had nothing better to do.

His eyes seemed to turn avaricious when he set his eyes on the pound of mutton in the cupboard.

No, I need to wait for Melissa to eat it together , Klein thought as he shook his head and rejected the idea of cooking half of it right now.

Although he often ate outside, he had still developed some basic culinary skills, owing to his living in a big city alone. His dishes were not delicious, but they were at least edible.

Klein turned his body around so that the mutton would not "seduce" him. Then, he suddenly realized that he had also bought peas and potatoes in the morning.

Potatoes! Klein immediately had an idea. He quickly turned back to the cupboard and took out two potatoes from a tiny pile of them.

He first cleaned the potatoes in the public bathroom and then added them into a pot so they were boiled together with the water.

After a while, he sprinkled into the water some yellow coarse salt from the spices container he found inside the cupboard.

He waited patiently for a few minutes before lifting the pot and pouring the "soup" into a few cups and a bowl. He took out the potatoes with a fork and placed them on the desk at the end.

Fffffff!

He blew at the potato as he peeled it bit by bit. The fragrance of boiled potato diffused through the air. It smelled very appetizing.

He salivated crazily; the heat could not deter him any longer. Klein took a bite despite having the potato only half peeled.

How fragrant! It had a powdery texture and tasted sweet as he chewed. He was instantly filled with emotions and he wolfed down the two potatoes. He even ate some of the skin.

Then, he held up the bowl and enjoyed the 'soup.' The pinch of salt in water proved to be thirst-quenching.

I really enjoyed eating potatoes this way when I was young… A filled Klein exclaimed in his head. Meanwhile, he tore off a small piece of bread and dipped it into the 'soup' to eat it softened.

Perhaps the ritual was too tiring; Klein ate two loaves of bread which amounted to a whole pound.

Klein felt he was finally rejuvenated. He enjoyed the joy of life after he drank the 'soup' before tidying up. Then, he took in the lustrous sunshine happily.

He sat back at the desk and began planning.

"I can't escape. I must think of a way to come into contact with mysticism and become a Beyonder as mentioned by Justice and The Hanged Man.

"I need to overcome the fear of the unknown.

"The only way now is to wait for the next 'gathering.' I need to try listen for the formula of the 'Spectator' potion or other things related to mysticism."

"There are four more days before Monday. Before that, I need to first figure out the problem with Klein. Why did he commit suicide? What happened to him?"

Unable to transmigrate back and wash his hands of everything, Klein picked up the notebook that lay on the table. He wanted to find hints that could help him regain his lost memory fragments.

The original Klein obviously had the habit of taking notes. He also liked to write diaries.

Klein was fully aware that the cabinet that supported the desk on the right stored a whole stack of completed notebooks.

The book he had began on the 10th of May. Matters regarding his school, and mentor, as well as content pertaining to knowledge were at the beginning.

"12th May. Mr. Azik mentioned that the common language used by the Balam Empire in the Southern Continent also developed from Ancient Feysac, a branch of Jotun. Why is this so? Does this mean that every sentient living being once spoke the same language? No, there has to be a mistake. According to 'The Revelation of Evernight' and 'The Book of Storms', giants were not the only hegemons of the world in primordial times. There were also elves, mutants, and dragons. Anyways, these are just myths and fantasies."

…

"16th May. Senior Associate Professor Cohen and Mr. Azik discussed the inevitability of the Age of Steam. Mr. Azik opined that it was just a coincidence because if it wasn't for Emperor Roselle, the Northern Continent would still be wielding swords like the Southern Continent. Mentor argued that Mr. Azik had placed too much emphasis on the contribution of an individual. He believes that with progress, even if there wasn't an Emperor Roselle, there would be an Emperor Robert. Therefore, the Age of Steam might come late, but eventually come nevertheless. I found little meaning in their discussion. I prefer discovering new things and unraveling the hidden past. Perhaps I am more suited to study archeology than history."

…

"29th May. Welch found me and told me that he had acquired a notebook from the Fourth Epoch. Oh my Goddess! A notebook from the Fourth Epoch! He didn't want to ask the archeology department's students for help so he came to Naya and me to help him decode the contents. How can I

refuse? Of course, I can only do it after my graduation defense. I can't afford diverting my attention at this stage."

This caught Klein's attention. Compared to the notes about history and viewpoint disagreements, the appearance of a notebook from the Fourth Epoch might have led to Klein's suicide.

The Fourth Epoch was the epoch before the present "Iron Age." Its history was mysterious and incomplete. Due to the fact that very few tombs, ancient cities, and records had been found, archaeologists and historians could only refer to the ambiguous records provided by the seven major Churches that centered around their religious teachings to roughly form the 'original' picture. They knew the existence of the Solomon Empire, the Tudor Dynasty, and the Trunsoest Empire.

Having set his sights on solving the mystery and restoring history, Klein didn't have much interest in the first three eras, whose roots were closer to legends. He was more interested in the Fourth Epoch, also known as the Age of the Gods.

"Hmm, so Klein was concerned for his future career and thus focused on the interview. But it was all futile…" Klein could not resist exclaiming.

Universities were still very scarce and the majority of students were either from noble or wealthy families. As long as he did not have an extreme mindset, a commoner who had been admitted into university would have been able to build precious social connections through group discussions and networking events despite the prejudice and exclusion from the entrenched social circles.

The very generous Welch McGovern was an example. He was the son of a banker from Constant City, Midseashire, Loen Kingdom. He was used to asking Naya and Klein for help because they were always in the same group for work.

Without thinking further, Klein continued reading the notebook.

"18th June. I have graduated. Farewell, Khoy University!"

"19th June. I have seen the notebook. By comparing sentence structures and root words, I discovered that it is a modified form of ancient Feysac. More precisely, over the course of its thousand-year history, the Feysac language had changed constantly, a little at a time."

"20th June. We have deciphered the contents of the first page. The author was a member of a family called Antigonus."

"21st June. He mentioned the Dark Emperor. This is anachronistic with regards to the time this notebook is deduced to be written. Is Professor wrong? Is 'Dark Emperor' a common title for every emperor of the Solomon Empire?"

"22nd June. The Antigonus family apparently had a very high standing in the Solomon Empire. The author mentions that he was making a secret transaction with a person named Tudor. Tudor? Is it related to the Tudor Dynasty?"

"23rd June. I am trying to restrain myself from thinking about the notebook and going to Welch's place. I need to prepare for the interview! It's very important!"

"24th June. Naya tells me that they have found something new. I think I need to check it out."

"25th June. From the new deciphered content, the author had accepted a mission to visit the 'Nation of the Evernight' situated at the summit of the highest peak of the Hornacis mountain range. Oh my Goddess! How can a nation exist at the summit of that peak which is over 6000 meters above sea level? How do they survive?"

"26th June. Are these strange things real?"

The record ended at this point. Zhou Mingrui transmigrated in the early hours of the 28th.

"Which means to say that there was indeed an entry for June 27th, it's that line… Everyone will die, including me…" Klein flipped to the page he first saw when he arrived, feeling goosebumps while he made the deduction.

In order to solve the mystery of the original Klein's suicide, he thought that he should visit Welch and take a look at the ancient notebook. However, with a lot of experience from novels, movies, and TV drama series, he suspected that if they were really related, this visit would be very dangerous —those who went investigating castles despite knowing that they were haunted served as a warning!

However, he had to go since escaping would never solve the problem. It would only make things worse, until it welled over and completely drowned him!

Perhaps call the police? But claiming to have committed suicide would be silly, right…

Knock!

Knock, knock!

There was a series of quick and forceful knocks.

Klein sat straight up and listened.

Knock!

Knock, knock!

The knocks echoed through the empty hallway.

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CHAPTER 10
THE NORM

"Who is it?"

Klein was thinking about the mysterious suicide of the original owner of this body and the unknown danger he might encounter when he heard the sudden knock on the door. He subconsciously opened the drawer, took out the revolver, and asked vigilantly.

The other party was quiet for two seconds before a slightly sharp voice, in Awwa's accent, replied, "It's me, Mountbatten, Bitsch Mountbatten."

The voice paused for a moment before adding, "Police."

Bitsch Mountbatten… When Klein heard this name, he immediately thought of the owner of this name.

He was the policeman in charge of the street where the apartment was located. He was a rude, brutal, hands-on man. But perhaps, only such a man could be a deterrent for alcoholics, thieves, part-time thieves, villains, and hooligans.

And his unique voice was one of his trademarks.

"Okay, I'll be right there!" Klein responded loudly.

He had planned to put the revolver back into the drawer but thinking that he had no idea why the police was outside and that they might search the room or do other things, he cautiously ran to the stove where the flames had already been extinguished and put the revolver in it.

Then he picked up the coal basket, shook a few pieces into the stove, covered the gun, and finally placed the kettle over the stove to conceal everything.

After doing all of that, he tidied up his clothes and quickly approached the door and murmured, "Sorry, I just had a nap."

Outside the door stood four policemen in black-and-white checkered uniforms with peak caps. Bitsch Mountbatten, the one with a brown beard, coughed and said to Klein, "These three inspectors have something to ask you."

Inspectors? Klein looked at the shoulder badges of the other three reflexively and found that two of them had three silver hexagons and one had two, both of which looked superior to Bitsch Mountbatten, who had only three chevrons.

As a history student, Klein did little to no research into the ranks of police epaulets, except that Bitsch Mountbatten often boasted of being a senior sergeant.

So these three are inspectors? Influenced by conversations with Benson, Welch, and his classmates, Klein had the common sense to make way and point into the room.

"Please come in. How might I help you?"

The leader of the three inspectors was a middle-aged man with sharp eyes. He seemed to be able to read the mind of a person and make them fearful. His eyes were wrinkled, and the edge of his hat revealed light brown hair. He looked around the room and asked in a deep voice, "Do you know Welch McGovern?"

"What's wrong with him?" Klein quivered and blurted back.

"I'm the one asking the questions." The dignified middle-aged police inspector had a stern look in his eyes.

The inspector next to him, also wearing three silver hexagons, looked at Klein and smiled gently.

"Don't be nervous. It's just a routine questioning."

This policeman was in his thirties, with a straight nose and gray eyes that, like a lake in an ancient forest that no one visited, gave him an indescribable sense of depth.

Klein took a breath and organized his words.

"If you mean Welch McGovern, the graduate of Khoy University from Constant, then I'm sure I know him. We are classmates with the same mentor, Senior Associate Professor Quentin Cohen."

In the Loen Kingdom, "Professor" was not only a professional title, but also a position, just like the combination of professors and department deans on Earth. That meant there could only be one professor in a university's department. If an associate professor wanted to become professor, they had to wait for their superior to retire, or force out their superior with their abilities.

As talents needed to be retained, the kingdom's Higher Education Commission had added senior associate professors in the three-level system of lecturers, associate professors and professors after years of observation. This title was given to anyone with high academic achievements or with enough seniority but did not make it to the position of professor.

At this point, Klein looked into the eyes of the middle-aged police inspector and thought for a second.

"To be honest, our relationship is quite good. During this period, I met with him and Naya frequently to interpret and discuss the Fourth Epoch

notebook that belonged to him. Inspectors, did something happen to him?"

Instead of answering, the middle-aged police inspector looked sideways at his gray-eyed colleague.

The inspector with the peak cap and ordinary looks replied mildly, "I'm sorry, Mr. Welch has passed away."

"WHAT?" Despite having some hunches, Klein could not help but shout out in astonishment.

Welch died just like the original owner of this body?

That is a little scary!

"What about Naya?" Klein questioned hurriedly.

"Ms. Naya passed away too," the gray-eyed police inspector said quite calmly. "Both of them died in Mr. Welch's house."

"Killed?" Klein had a vague guess.

Perhaps it was suicide…

The gray-eyed inspector shook his head.

"No, the scene suggests that they committed suicide. Mr. Welch hit the wall with his head many times, covering the wall with blood. Ms. Naya drowned herself in a basin. Yes, the kind used to wash your face."

"That's impossible…" Klein's hairs stood on their ends as he seemed capable of imagining the strange scene.

A girl kneeling on a chair and burying her face into a basin filled with water. Her soft brown hair swaying in the wind, but her entire person remaining motionless. Welch falling to the ground and staring at the ceiling

intently. His forehead in a complete blood-mangled mess, while the traces of the impact on the wall were evident the with dripping of blood…

The gray-eyed inspector continued, "We believe so too, but the autopsy results and the situation at the scene exclude factors such as drugs and external forces. They—being Mr. Welch and Ms. Naya—showed no signs of struggling."

Before Klein could speak again, he stepped into the room and asked, pretending to be casual, "When was the last time you saw Mr. Welch or Ms. Naya?"

As he spoke, he gestured with his eyes to his colleague with two silver hexagons.

He was a young police inspector and looked about the same age as Klein. With black sideburns and green pupils, he was good looking and had a poet's romantic temperament.

When he heard the question, Klein thought about it and answered it thoughtfully, "It should be June 26th, we were reading a new chapter in the notes. Then, I went home to prepare for my interview on June 30th. Uh, the interview was for the History Department of Tingen University."

Tingen was known as the city of universities. There were two universities, Tingen and Khoy, as well as technical schools, law colleges and business colleges. It was second only to Backlund, the capital.

As soon as he finished, he saw the young police inspector walk towards his desk in the corner of his eye and pick up the notes which resembled more of a diary.

Damn! I forgot to hide it!

"Hey!" Klein cried out.

The young inspector smiled back at him, but did not stop flipping through his notes, while the gray-eyed inspector explained, "This is a necessary procedure."

At this time, Bitsch Mountbatten and the dignified middle-aged police inspectors were just watching without interrupting or assisting in the search.

Where are your search warrants? Klein had intended to question them, but on second thought, the judicial system of the Loen Kingdom did not seem to have such a thing as search warrants. At least he did not know if there was one. After all, the police force had only been established for fifteen or sixteen years.

When the original owner of this body was still a child, they were still called Public Security Officers.

Klein couldn't stop it. He watched the young inspector flip through his notes, but the gray-eyed inspector did not ask any questions.

"What is this strange thing?" The young police inspector turned to the end of the notes and suddenly asked, "And what does this mean? 'Everyone will die, including me'…”

Isn't it common sense that everyone dies except for deities? Klein was prepared to quibble, but it suddenly occurred to him that he had planned to "connect" with the police in case of possible danger, but he had no reasons or excuses.

He made a decision in less than a second. Putting his hand over his forehead, he answered painfully, "I have no idea. I really have no idea… When I woke up this morning, I felt I wasn't quite right, as if I had forgotten something. It's especially true for whatever happened recently. I don't even know why I had written such a sentence."

Sometimes, being frank was the best way to solve a problem. Of course, it required skills. There were things that could be said and could not be said,

and the order of what was said first mattered.

As an expert keyboard warrior, Klein was also good at sophistry.

"That is ridiculous! Do you think we are fools?" Bitsch Mountbatten could not help but interject angrily.

This is such a bad lie that it insults the intelligence of his and his colleagues!

It's better for you to pretend to be mentally ill than to pretend to be an amnesiac!

"I'm speaking the truth," Klein responded frankly, looking into the eyes of Mountbatten and middle-aged police inspectors.

It really could not be more true.

"Maybe it is," the gray-eyed police inspector said slowly.

What? He really believed it? Klein was surprised himself.

The gray-eyed inspector smiled at him and said, "An expert will come in two days and believe me, she should be able to help you to recall your lost memories."

Expert? Help me remember my memories? In the field of psychology? Klein frowned.

Hey, what if his memories of Earth were exposed? He suddenly felt like facepalming himself.

The young police inspector put down his notes and searched his desk and room. Fortunately, he focused on books instead of lifting the kettle.

"Well, Mr. Klein, thank you for your cooperation. We advise that you'd better not leave Tingen for the coming days. If you have to, please notify Inspector Mountbatten, or you'll become a fugitive," the gray-eyed police inspector warned.

That's it? That's it for today? No other questions with deeper investigations? Or taking me back to the police station to torture me for information? Klein was at a loss.

Nevertheless, he wanted to solve the odd turn of events brought about by Welch too. So he nodded.

"That wouldn't be an issue."

The inspectors exited the room one by one, and the young man at the end suddenly patted Klein on the shoulder.

"It's really nice. Very lucky."

"What?" Klein's face was puzzled.

The green-eyed police inspector with a poet's temperament smiled and said, "Generally speaking, the norm is for all the involved parties to die in such an event. We are very glad and fortunate to see you still alive."

After that, he exited the room and closed the door behind him in well-mannered manner.

The norm is for everyone to die together? Very glad that I'm still alive? Fortunate that I'm still alive?

On this June afternoon, Klein was chilling all over.

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CHAPTER 11
REAL CULINARY SKILLS

The norm is for everyone to die together? Very glad that I'm still alive? Fortunate that I'm still alive?

Klein shivered and quickly ran to the door, trying to catch up with the policemen and ask for protection.

But as soon as he reached the handle, he suddenly stopped.

That officer talked so horribly about it, why didn't they protect me, an important witness or key lead?

Isn't that too careless?

Were they just probing me? Or maybe it's a bait?

All kinds of thoughts rushed into Klein's mind; he suspected that the police were still secretly "watching" him, observing his reaction.

He felt much calmer after thinking of this and was no longer so panicked. He slowly opened the door, deliberately shouting with a trembling voice at the staircase, "You guys will protect me, right?"

Tap, tap, tap… There was no response from the police officers, and there was no change in the rhythm of the contact between the leather shoes and the wooden stairs.

"I know! You'll do that!" Klein shouted again in a tone of feigned conviction, trying to act like a normal person that was in danger.

The sound of footsteps gradually weakened and disappeared into the bottom floor of the apartment.

Klein snorted and laughed, "Isn't that response too fake? Their acting skills are not up to standard!"

He did not run after them. Instead, he turned back to the room and closed the door behind him.

In the next few hours, Klein fully expressed what they called back in Foodaholic Empire, China—restlessness, nervousness, agitation, inadvertence and murmuring words that he did not understand. He did not slack just because there was no one around.

This is called the self-cultivation of an actor! He laughed at himself in his heart.

When the sun moved to the west, the clouds on the horizon appeared to be reddish-orange. Tenants in the apartment came home one after another; Klein shifted his focus elsewhere.

"Melissa is almost done with school…" He looked at the stove, lifted the kettle, peeled off the coal and took out the revolver.

Without pause or delay, he reached to the back of the board under the double-decked bed where more than ten wooden strips were staggered out.

After clipping the left wheel between a piece of wooden strip and board, Klein straightened up and waited uneasily, fearing that the police would burst open the door and rush into the room with guns in their hands.

If it was an Age of Steam, he was certain he would not be seen by anyone when he did that. However, there were extraordinary powers here, ones that he had proven through his own experiences.

After waiting for a few minutes, there was no movement at the door. There was only the chatter between two tenants who were heading for the Heart of the Wild Bar on Iron Cross Street.

"Phew." Klein exhaled, feeling assured.

All he needed to do was wait for Melissa's return and cook the stewed mutton with tender peas!

When the idea came to Klein's mind, his mouth seemed to taste the rich flavor of the gravy; he remembered how Melissa cooked stewed mutton with tender peas.

First, she boiled the water and stir-fried the meat. Then, she added onions, salt, a little pepper, and water. After a specific period of time, the peas and potatoes were added, and the stew was to be cooked for an additional forty or fifty minutes with the lid on.

"It's indeed a simple and crude way to do it… Supported purely by the flavors of the meat itself!" Klein shook his head.

But there was no other way about it. It was hard for commoners to have many kinds of condiments and various cooking methods. They could only pursue simple, practical, and economical methods. As long as the meat was not burnt or spoiled, anything was good for people who could only eat meat once or twice a week.

Klein was not a very good cook himself and ordered takeout food most of the time. But by cooking three or four times a week, after many weeks of accumulated practice, he had a passing standard and felt that he would not let the pound of mutton down.

"When Melissa comes back to cook it, it will be done after 7:30pm. She would be starving by then… It's time for her to see what real cooking is!" Klein made an excuse for himself. First, he started the fire again, went to

the bathroom to collect water, and washed the mutton. Then he took out the kitchen boards and knives before chopping the mutton into tiny chunks.

As for the explanation for his sudden culinary skills, he decided to blame it on the dead Welch McGovern, who had not only hired a chef who was good at the Midseashire flavor, but also often created his own delicacies and invited people to try them.

Well, the dead cannot refute me!

Nevertheless, tsk, this is a world with Beyonders; the dead are not necessarily unable to speak. With that in mind, Klein was a little guilty conscience.

He threw aside his confused thoughts and put the meat into the soup bowl. Then he took out the condiment box and added in a spoonful of the crude salt, half of which had begun yellowing. In addition, he cautiously took some black pepper grains from a special small bottle, mixing and marinating them together.

He placed the saucepan on the stove and, while waiting for it to heat up, Klein rummaged for the carrots from yesterday and cut them into pieces with the onions he bought today.

When he was done with his preparations, he took out a small can from the cupboard and opened it. There was not much lard left in it.

Klein took a spoonful, put it in the pan, and melted it. He added in the carrots and onions and stirred it for a while.

As the fragrance began to pervade, Klein poured all the mutton into the pot and fried it with care for a while.

He should have added cooking wine in the process, or red wine at least. However, the Moretti family did not have these luxuries and could only

drink a glass of beer a week. Klein had to make do with whatever was available and poured in some boiled water.

After stewing for about twenty minutes, he opened the lid, put the tender peas and cut potatoes in it, and added a cup of hot water and two spoons of salt.

He closed the lid, lowered the fire, and exhaled satisfactorily, waiting for his sister to reach home.

As seconds turned into minutes, the fragrance in the room intensified. There was the allure from the meat, the rich smell of potatoes, and the refreshing scent of onions.

The smell gradually mixed up, and Klein swallowed his saliva from time to time, keeping track of the time with his pocket watch.

After more than forty minutes, some not-so-brisk but rhythmic footsteps approached. A key was inserted, the handle was turned, and the door opened.

Before Melissa came in, she whispered doubtfully, "Smells good…”

With her bag still in her hand, she stepped in and glanced over at the stove.

"You made this?" Melissa took off her veil hat and her hand paused mid-air, looking at Klein in astonishment.

She twitched her nose and inhaled more of the fragrance. Her eyes quickly softened, and she seemed to find some confidence.

"You made this?" she asked again.

"Are you afraid I'd waste the mutton?" Klein smiled and returned with a question. Without waiting for an answer, he said to himself, "Don't worry, I

specifically asked Welch to teach me how to cook this dish. You know, he has a good cook."

"First time?" Melissa's eyebrows creased subconsciously, but they were smoothed by the fragrance.

"It looks like I'm talented." Klein laughed. "It's almost done. Put your books and veil hat down somewhere. Go to the bathroom and wash your hands, and then get ready to taste it. I'm very confident about it."

When she heard her brother's orderly arrangements and saw his gentle and calm smile, Melissa stood rooted at the door and failed to respond in her daze.

"Do you prefer the mutton to be cooked longer?" Klein urged with a laugh.

"Ah, okay, okay!" Melissa jolted back to her senses. With handbag and veil in each hand, she rushed into the room quickly.

When the lid of the saucepan was uncovered, a sudden blast of steam appeared before Klein's eyes. Two pieces of rye bread were already placed to the side of the mutton and tender peas, allowing them to absorb the fragrance and heat to become soft.

By the time Melissa had packed her items, washed her hands and face, and returned, a plate of stewed mutton with tender peas, potatoes, carrots and onions was already placed on the table. Two pieces of rye bread, colored by a light dip into the gravy, were on their plates.

"Come on, try it." Klein pointed to the wooden fork and spoon next to the plate.

Melissa was still a little confused. She didn't refuse; she picked up a potato with her fork, put it into her mouth and bit it lightly.

The taste of the starchy potato and gravy fragrance flooded her mouth. Her saliva secretion went crazy as she gobbled down the potato in a few mouthfuls.

"Try the mutton." Klein gestured at the plate with his chin.

He had tasted it just now and thought it was barely at a passing standard, but it was enough for a girl who was inexperienced with what the world had to offer. After all, she only ate meat occasionally.

Melissa's eyes were filled with anticipation as she carefully forked some mutton.

It was very tender and, as soon as it entered the mouth, nearly melted. The fragrance of the meat exploded in her mouth, filling it with delicious meat juices.

It was an unprecedented feeling and that made Melissa unable to stop eating.

By the time she realized it, she had already eaten several pieces of the mutton.

"I… I… Klein, this was supposed to be prepared for you…” Melissa blushed and stammered.

"I'd nibbled some of the food just now. It's the privilege of being a cook." Klein smiled and soothed her sister. He picked up his fork and spoon. At times, he would eat a piece of meat and sometimes, he would stuff his mouth full of peas. At other times, he would put down the utensils, break off a piece of rye bread and dip it in gravy.

Melissa relaxed and was immersed in the delicacy again by Klein's normal behavior.

"It's really delicious. It doesn't seem like you were doing it for the first time." Melissa looked at the empty dish and praised him with all her heart. Even the gravy was finished.

"It's a long way from Welch's chef. When I'm rich, I'll take you and Benson out to the restaurant and have a better meal!" Klein said. He was beginning to look forward to it himself.

"Your interview… Burp…” Melissa did not finish her words because she suddenly let out a sound of contentment involuntarily.

She put her hand over her mouth in a hurry and looked embarrassed.

The fault is with the stewed mutton with tender peas just now! It was just too delicious.

Klein laughed secretly and decided not to make fun of his sister. He pointed to the plate and said, "This is your mission."

"All right!" Melissa stood up immediately, took the basin and rushed out the door.

When she came back, she opened the cupboard to check the condiment box and other items as per normal.

"Did you just use them?" Melissa was surprised, and turned to Klein, holding the black pepper bottle and lard can.

Klein shrugged his shoulders and laughed.

"Just a little. It's the price of a delicacy."

Melissa's eyes twinkled, her expression changing for a few moments, before she finally said, "Let me cook in the future."

"Um… You have to hurry up and prepare for the interview. You have to think about your job."

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CHAPTER 12
HERE AGAIN

Melissa, can you not rub my nose in it… Klein muttered inwardly. He felt a throbbing pain in his head.

The amount of content Klein had forgotten was considered a lot, but neither was it negligible. The interview was in two days, so how could he find the time to make up for it…?

Furthermore, he was involved in such strange paranormal activity, so how would it be possible that he would be in the mood to revise?

Klein gave his sister a perfunctory response and began putting on the appearance of studying. Melissa moved a chair over to sit beside him. With light shining from the gas lamp, she began working on her assignments.

The atmosphere was serene. When it was almost eleven o'clock, the siblings bade each other goodnight and went to bed.

…

Knock!

Knock! Knock!

Poundings on the door roused Klein from his dreams.

He peered out of the window to see the first glimmer of dawn. In a daze, he flipped over and sat up.

"Who is it?"

Look at the time now! Why didn't Melissa wake me up?

"It's me. Dunn Smith," a man with a deep voice outside the door replied.

Dunn Smith? Don't know him.… Klein got off his bed and shook his head as he walked towards the door.

He opened the door to see the gray-eyed police inspector whom he had met the day before standing in front of him.

Alarmed, Klein asked, "Is there something wrong?"

The policeman replied with a stern look, "We found a carriage driver. He testified that you had gone to Mr. Welch's place on the 27th—the day when Mr. Welch and Ms. Naya died. Furthermore, Mr. Welch was the one who paid for your transportation fees."

Klein was startled. He did not feel a tinge of fear or guilt that one would expect from having his lies exposed.

It was because he was not even lying. In fact, he was surprised by the evidence provided by Dunn Smith.

On the 27th of June, the former Klein had indeed gone to Mr. Welch's place. On the night that he returned, he killed himself, the exact same way as Welch and Naya did!

Klein gave a forced smile and said, "This is insufficient evidence. It does not directly prove that I am associated with the death of Welch and Naya. Honestly speaking, I'm also very curious about the whole incident. I want to know what exactly happened to my two poor friends. But… But… I really can't remember. In fact I have almost completely forgotten what I had done on the 27th. You may find it hard to believe, but I fully relied on the diaries

I had written to roughly make a guess that I had gone to Welch's place on the 27th."

"You sure have great mental fortitude," Dunn Smith said while nodding. He showed not a trace of anger; nor was he smiling.

"You should be able to hear my sincerity," Klein looked him straight in the eye and said.

I'm telling the truth! Of course, only part of it!

Dunn Smith did not give an immediate response. He swept his glance across the room before saying slowly, "Mr. Welch lost a revolver. I guess… I should be able to find it here. Right? Mr. Klein?"

Indeed… Klein finally understood where the revolver had come from. A thought flashed in his mind and he came to the final verdict in an instant.

He raised his hands halfway and retreated, leaving a path open. Then, he signaled at the bunk bed with his chin.

"Behind the bed board."

He did not specifically mention that it was the bottom deck, as no one would normally hide things at the back of the bed board on an upper deck. That would be too obvious for guests to notice at a glance.

Dunn Smith did not move forward. The corners of his mouth twitched as he asked, "Nothing to add on?"

Without hesitation, Klein replied, "There is!"

"Yesterday, when I woke up in the middle of the night, I realized I was laying on my desk with a revolver beside me. There was a bullet at the corner of the room. It was as if I had committed suicide. But due to a lack of experience of never having used a gun, or maybe I was too scared at the

final moment… Anyway, the bullet did not achieve the desired result, my head is still in its place. I am still alive now.

"And since then, I have lost some memories, including what I saw and did at Welch's place on the 27th. I'm not lying. I really can't remember."

For the sake of being eliminated as a suspect. For the sake of getting rid of all these strange events surrounding him, Klein explained almost everything that had happened. Except, the transmigration and "gathering."

Also, Klein was careful with his words, allowing every sentence to be amenable. Such as, not revealing the fact that the bullet had hit his brains, but only mentioning that it did not achieve the desired result, and that his head was still in its place.

To others, these two statements might seem to convey the exact same ideas, but in reality they were like chalk and cheese.

Dunn Smith listened quietly, then said, "This corresponds with what I had surmised. It also corresponds with the hidden logic of similar incidents in the past. Of course, I have no idea how you managed to survive."

"I'm glad you believe in me. I don't know how I survived either." Klein heaved a small sigh of relief.

"But—" Dunn threw out a conjunction. "There is no use in me believing you. You are currently the prime suspect. You have to be confirmed by an 'expert' that you have indeed forgotten what you went through, or that you indeed have nothing to do with the deaths of Mr. Welch and Miss Naya."

He coughed, his expression becoming serious.

"Mr. Klein, I seek your cooperation on coming with me to the police station for the investigation. This should take roughly two to three days if it is confirmed that there are no issues with you."

"The expert is here?" Klein asked blankly in return.

Didn't they say it would take another two days?

"She came earlier than expected." Dunn turned sideways, signaling for Klein to leave.

"Allow me to leave a note," Klein requested.

Benson was still away and Melissa had gone to school. He could only leave a note to inform them that he was involved in an incident associated with Welch so that they would not worry about him.

Dunn nodded, barely minding.

"Alright."

Klein returned to the desk. As he searched for paper, he began thinking about what was about to occur.

Honestly speaking, he did not wish to meet the 'expert.' After all, he had a bigger secret.

In a place where there were seven major churches, under the premise that Emperor Roselle, who was suspected to be a transmigrator predecessor, was assassinated, a thing like 'transmigration' usually meant having to go to court and enter arbitration!

But, without weapons, combat skills, or superpowers, he was no match for a professional policeman. What's more, a few of Dunn's subordinates were standing in the dark outside.

Once they draw their guns and shoot at me, I'd be finished!

"Ugh, I'll take one step at a time." Klein left the note, grabbed his keys, and followed Dunn out the room.

Along the dark aisle, four policemen in black-and-white checkered uniforms split into pairs and guarded them on both sides. They were very alert.

Tap. Tap. Tap. Klein followed alongside Dunn as they went down the wooden stairs which occasionally creaked in protest.

Outside the apartment, there was a four-wheeled carriage. On the side of the carriage, there was the "two crossed swords and a crown" police emblem. Their surroundings were crowded and bustling with noise as usual.

"Go on, up." Dunn signaled for Klein to go first.

Klein was just about to step forward when an oyster seller suddenly grabbed a customer and claimed that he was a thief.

Both parties wrestled and triggered a response from the horses, causing great chaos.

An opportunity!

There wasn't much time for Klein to think any further; he bent forward and dashed towards the crowd.

Either shoving or dodging, he escaped frantically towards the other end of the street.

Right now, for the sake of not "meeting" the expert, he could only proceed by going to the pier outside the city, taking a boat down the Tussock River and escaping to the capital, Backlund. The population was higher there, making it easier to hide.

Of course, he could also get on a steam train, go eastward to the nearest Enmat Harbor and take the sea route to Pritz, then towards Backlund.

Not long after, Klein arrived at a street and made a turn onto Iron Cross Street. There were several carriages that could be hired.

"To the pier outside the city." Klein reached out his hand and hopped onto one of the carriages.

He had thought through things clearly. Firstly, he had to mislead the police that were coming for him. Once the carriage was a suitable distance away from them, he would jump right off!

"Alrighty." The carriage driver tugged at the reins.

Clop! Clop! Clop… The carriage left Iron Cross Street.

Just as Klein was about to jump off the carriage, he noticed that it had turned into another road. It wasn't leading out of the city!

"Where are you going?" Klein blurted in his momentary daze.

"To Welch's place…" the carriage driver answered monotonously.

What!? Klein was at a loss for words. The carriage driver turned around, exposing his cold gray eyes. It was Dunn Smith, the gray-eyed policeman!

"You!" Klein was flustered. Everything suddenly became a blur as though the world spun around him when he instantly sat up.

Sat up? Klein looked around, confused. He noticed the crimson moon outside the window and the room being covered in a crimson veil.

He reached out with his hand to feel his forehead. It was all moist and cold. Cold sweat. His back felt exactly the same.

"It was a nightmare…" Klein heaved a sigh. "All is well… All is well…"

He found it weird. He was rather clear-minded in his dream, he was even able to think calmly!

After calming down, Klein looked at his pocket watch. It was only two in the morning. He got out of bed quietly and planned to head to the washroom where he could wash his face and empty his burgeoning bladder.

He opened the door and walked along the dark corridor. Under the dim moonlight, he walked lightly towards the washroom.

Suddenly, he noticed a silhouette outside the window at the end of the corridor.

That silhouette was wearing a black windbreaker that was shorter than a coat, but longer than a jacket.

That silhouette was partly camouflaged in the darkness, bathing in the crimson moonlight.

That silhouette turned around slowly. His eyes deep, gray, and cold.

Dunn Smith!

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CHAPTER 13
NIGHTHAWK

Plop!

Klein could not help but take a step back. For a moment he was unsure if he was awake or still in his dreams.

The silhouette took off his black top hat and bowed a little as he said with a smile, "Reintroducing myself, Nighthawk, Dunn Smith."

Nighthawk? One of the codenames of the Church of the Evernight Goddess' Beyonder teams which 'Justice' and 'The Hanged Man' mentioned before? Klein suddenly realised something, and exclaimed after making a connection, "You can control dreams? You just made me dream of that?"

Nighthawk Dunn Smith wore his black hat again, concealing his slightly high hairline. With deep gray eyes he said, "No, I only entered your dream and made the necessary guidance."

His voice was deep and soothing; it reverberated through the dimly lit corridor without disturbing the sweet dreams of others, "In dreams, even though much of your usually suppressed emotions and various dark thoughts in you are amplified—making everything seem chaotic, absurd, and crazy—they are all rooted in reality since reality exists. For veterans like me, everything is crystal clear. Compared to a conscious you, I believe the you in your dreams more."

This… What normal human being could control his dream? If I had dreamed of something on Earth, wouldn't Dunn Smith have noticed? Klein was petrified by what had happened in the dream.

Yet he quickly found it bizarre. He remembered being very much sober and rational—knowing what to say and what not to say.

To put it simply, it did not feel like dreaming at all!

So, Dunn Smith only "saw" what I wanted him to see?

Klein's mind whirled as he gained a glimmer of understanding.

This is a perk that resulted from transmigration? Like having a special body and soul? Or was it the effects of that luck enhancement ritual?

"So, Mr Smith, do you believe that I really lost my memory?" Klein organized his thoughts and asked in reply.

Dunn Smith did not answer him directly. Instead he looked at him keenly.

"You are actually not surprised by the course of events?"

"I've met people who wouldn't believe in the power of the Beyonders, and they would rather believe that they haven't really woken up."

Klein tersely acknowledged as he said, "Perhaps, I have always been praying, hoping that there was such power to help me."

"An interesting train of thought… Perhaps you survived not only because you were lucky." Dunn nodded expressionlessly. "I can now confirm that you really lost parts of your memories due to the incident, especially those related to it."

"So can I go back now?" Klein heaved a long sigh of relief in his heart as he probed.

Dunn placed a hand in his pocket and walked slowly towards Klein, the surrounding darkness becoming tranquil and gentle.

"No, you still have to come with me to see the expert," he smiled politely and said.

"Why?" Klein blurted out, then added, "You don't believe in the findings from my dream?"

You must be joking, if that "expert" specializes in hypnosis or mind-reading and stuff, then wouldn't my biggest secret be exposed?

The consequences would be beyond imagination!

"I'm quite humble usually, but I'm still confident for things related to dreams." Dunn calmly replied, "However, for important key matters, there is no harm in confirming them again. Plus, our specialties lie in different areas. Perhaps, she can help you recover some of your memories."

Not waiting for Klein to reply, his voice turned deeper. "After all you're connected to the whereabouts of that Antigonus family notebook."

"What?" Klein froze.

Dunn stopped in front of him, locking his gray eyes on Klein's eyes and said, "At the scene of the suicide, there was not a single trace of that notebook from the Fourth Epoch. Welch is dead, Naya is dead; you are our only lead."

“…Alright then." Klein went silent for a moment before exhaling.

A missing notebook… now this is really peculiar!

How did I not think about the whereabouts of that notebook from the Fourth Epoch!

Dunn nodded slightly, walking pass Klein and said, "Lock your door and come with me to Welch's apartment, the expert is waiting for us there."

Klein took in a silent breath. His heart was thumping wildly as he felt uneasy.

He wanted to decline and even had the intention to run. However, he believed that with what had happened in his dreams, Dunn Smith would have definitely heightened his level of guard. And with the difference in strength between a normal human and a Beyonder, there was little chance of success by using force.

He must have a revolver with him too… He must also have had practice using the revolver…

Many thoughts flashed past his mind, and eventually Klein chose to accept the reality.

"Alright."

Sigh, I can only take one step at a time and see how things unfold; maybe, that miraculous power in my dream will take effect again…

"Then let's go," Dunn said in an indifferent tone.

Klein turned and followed. After taking two steps, he suddenly stopped and said, "Mr. Smith, I… I would like to use the bathroom first."

I came out originally for the bathroom…

Dunn did not stop him. Instead, he gave him a keen look and said, "No problem, Klein. Believe me, I am far more powerful than you can imagine in the dark night."

In the dark night… Klein silently repeated this phrase.

He did not make any reckless attempt to escape and honestly relieved himself. He then washed his face with cold water, completely calming himself down.

Klein changed his outfit and closed the door to his apartment. With gentle steps, Klein followed Dunn down the stairs and walked towards the building's entrance.

In such a tranquil setting, Dunn Smith opened his mouth and spoke suddenly, "At the end of the dream, why did you try to escape? What were you afraid of?"

Klein immediately thought of an answer as he said, "I do not remember what I did at Welch's place, nor do I remember if I was directly involved in Welch's and Naya's deaths. I was afraid that if it was really proven to be my doing, I would rather gamble and escape. I can then start anew in the Southern Continent."

"I would've done the same if I were you," Dunn said as he pushed opened the door to the building, letting in the cool midnight breeze to disperse the sweltering heat inside.

He was not afraid of Klein running away as he got on the carriage. It was exactly the one Klein had dreamed of—a four-wheeled carriage drawn by a single horse and the carriage driver. There was also the police emblem of double-crossed swords that clustered a crown carved onto the side of the carriage.

Klein followed into the carriage. Inside, there was a thick carpet laid out and the place was filled with a soothing fragrance.

Having sat down, he looked for a topic to probe for more information.

"Mr. Smith, what if—and I mean if—the 'expert' confirms that I have really forgotten a part of my memories? And that there is no other evidence which points to me being the perpetrator or a victim, would this be over?"

"In theory, yes. We will try to search for the notebook through other means. As long as it exists, it can be found. Of course, before that, we will have to make sure you are not cursed or have any scent of cacodemons and that

there are no related psychological problems lingering. We must ensure that you can embrace the rest of your life peacefully and healthily." Dunn Smith had a smile on his face, a rather unusual smile.

Klein caught on to this point keenly, and promptly inquired, "In theory?"

"Yes, only in theory. In this field of work, there are always twisted, unorthodox, and inexplicable things happening." Dunn looked Klein in the eye and said, "Their continuation or end are not what we can foresee or control at times."

"For example?" Klein actually felt frightened for a moment.

The carriage sped through an almost empty street. Dunn took out his tobacco pipe and sniffed it, saying, "When we believe that things have come to an end, with everything going back to normal, it would resurface in a terrifying, chilling way."

"A few years ago, we handled a case regarding an evil cult. They did live sacrifices to please an evil god by making followers commit suicide. When one of the followers was chosen, his survival instincts triumphed over his foolishness, twisted beliefs, and psychedelic drugs. He secretly escaped and reported to the police.

"The case was handed over to us. It was a very small mission, since there were no Beyonders in that cult. The deity they worshiped was actually randomly thought up by their leader merely for the sake of money and satisfaction. Humanity was lost there.

"We only used two members, coupled with the support from the police, to suppress this cult. No one was off the hook. For that whistleblower, we also confirmed that he had no lingering demonic scent left on him. He was not cursed and did not suffer any mental disorders. He didn't have any personality problems or any other irregularities, nothing.

"Later, he got a decent advancement in his career, got married to a very good wife, had a son and a daughter. His dark past seemed far away from him. The horror and bloodshed seemed to have completely vanished."

At this point, Dunn Smith gave out a laugh and said, "Yet in March this year, despite being in good financial health and having a loving wife and adorable kids… he strangled himself to death in his own office."

The crimson moonlight outside the carriage window shone upon Dunn Smith.

At that instance, his seemingly self-derisive smile made Klein feel unspeakably horrified.

"Strangled himself to death…" Klein drew in a gasp of cool air silently, as if seeing his own tragic end.

Even if I escaped it once, it might just be temporary?

Is there any way to resolve this completely?

Become a Beyonder to fight it?

The carriage returned to silence. Countless thoughts welled in Klein's mind.

Under an awkward silence, the carriage traveled for a long time at high speeds.

Just as Klein made up his mind to consult Dunn Smith for any solutions, the carriage came to a halt.

"Mr. Smith, we have reached Welch's apartment." The carriage driver's voice was heard.

"Let's get down." Dunn straightened out his black windbreaker that reached his knees.

"Oh, let me introduce beforehand, the official disguise of the 'expert' is the most renowned spirit medium of Awwa County."

Klein suppressed his other thoughts and asked curiously, "Then what is her actual identity?"

Dunn half-turned his body and turned his head back, with his abstruse gray eyes he said, "A true Spirit Medium."

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CHAPTER 14
THE MEDIUM

A true medium.… Klein repeated this description inwardly, and did not speak again. He followed Dunn Smith down the carriage.

Welch's place in Tingen was a detached house with a garden. The road outside the hollowed metal gates allowed four carriages to pass through at once. Street lamps lined the sides of the road every fifty meters. They looked different from the ones Klein had seen in his previous life. They were gas lamps and the height of every lamp was about that of an adult male so that it was convenient to light the lamps.

The black metal was closely appressed to the glass, forming a checkered pattern, casting out classical paper lantern-like 'artworks.' Coldness and warmth were intertwined while darkness and light coexisted.

Walking along the pathway blanketed by rays from the sunset, Klein and Dunn Smith entered Welch's rented place through the ajar metal gate.

Facing the main entrance was a cemented road that led straight to a two-floored bungalow. Two carriages could go at once.

There was a garden on the left and a lawn to the right. The pleasantly faint fragrance from the flowers mixed with the cool scent of the fresh grass made one feel happy and relaxed.

As soon as he stepped in, Klein shivered and peered around.

He felt that in the garden, somewhere in the lawn, on the roof, behind the swing, somewhere in a dark corner, pairs of eyes were observing him!

There was clearly no one here; yet, Klein felt as if he was on a crowded street.

This strange contrast—this peculiar feeling—tensed him up. A chill ran up his spine.

"Something's wrong!" he couldn't help but exclaim to Dunn.

Dunn's expression remained unchanged as he walked beside him and replied calmly, "Just ignore them."

Since the "Nighthawk" had said so, Klein tolerated the chilling feeling of not being able to notice the perpetrator despite being followed, spied, and observed. Step by step, he arrived at the main entrance of the bungalow.

If this goes on any longer, I will go crazy… As Dunn reached out his hand to knock on the door, Klein quickly turned around. Flowers swayed in the wind, without a person in sight.

"Come in, gentlemen." A seemingly ethereal voice came from inside the house.

Dunn turned the doorknob, pushed the door open and said to a woman on the sofa, "Daly, any results?"

The chandelier in the living room was unlit. A set of two leather couches surrounded a marble coffee table.

On the table was a lit candle, but the light emitted a cobalt blue glow. It covered the half-enclosed living room, dining room, and kitchen in a strange, eerie hue.

On the middle of the sofa sat a lady in a hooded black robe who wore blue eyeshadow and blush. An exposed silver bracelet with a hanging white crystal pendant was worn around her wrist.

At the first sight of her, Klein had an inexplicable feeling. She was dressed just like a real medium…

Was she stereotyping herself?

Daly, the "medium" with uncanny beauty, took a quick glance at Klein with her twinkling emerald eyes. She looked at Dunn Smith and said, "The original spirits have all disappeared, including that of Welch's and Naya's. Right now, all these little rascals know nothing at all."

Spirits? Spirit Medium… All the invisible things that were spying on him previously were spirits? There were so many of them? Klein removed his hat and placed it across his chest, bowing slightly as he said, "Good evening, Madam."

Dunn Smith sighed. "That's tricky…”

"Daly, this is Klein Moretti. See if you can get anything out of him."

The medium, Daly, shifted her gaze onto Klein immediately. She pointed at a single armchair and said, "Please, take a seat."

"Thank you." Klein nodded, took a few steps over, and sat down obediently. His heart raced uncontrollably.

Whether I survive, whether I get through this successfully or have my secrets exposed will all depend on whatever happens next!

And the thing that made him feel the most helpless was that he had nothing to rely on. He could only place his hopes on his inherent specialness…

This feeling really sucks… Klein thought bitterly.

Next, Dunn sat on the two-seater sofa opposite of Klein. Daly took out two thumb-sized glass bottles from her waist pouch.

Her emerald eyes smiled at Klein as she said, "I need a bit of help here. After all, you are not an enemy, I can't treat you harshly. That might make you uncomfortable or put you in pain. It might even leave some serious after-effects on you. I will give you some fragrances, making you feel tender and smooth, which will allow you to let loose bit by bit so that you can truly indulge in those feelings."

That sounded wrong… Klein gaped as his eyes were filled with shock.

Seated across him, Dunn laughed and said, "Don't be weirded out. We are different from the fellows from the Church of the Lord of Storms. Here, the ladies can also verbally tease men. In this regard, you should be able to understand. Your mother was a devout believer of the Goddess. You and your brother used to attend Sunday school at Church."

"I understand. It's just that I never thought that she would be such a… such a…" Klein gestured, as he could not find the right words. He almost blurted out the direct translation for "veteran driver [1] ".

Dunn curved the corners of his mouth up and said, "Don't worry. Actually, Daly seldom does this. She just wants to use these methods to calm you down. She prefers corpses over men."

"You make me sound perverted," Daly interjected with a smile.

She opened one of the little bottles and dripped a few drops onto the bright blue candle flame.

"Night vanilla, slumber flower, and chamomile, all distilled and extracted to form this aromatic floral essence. I call it 'Amantha;' it means tranquility in the Hermes language. It smells really amazing."

As they chatted, the candle flame flickered, evaporating the floral essence and filling the room with its aroma.

A beautifully enchanting aroma found its way into Klein's nostrils. He no longer felt tensed up. He was instantly calm as if he was gazing into the darkness of the silent night.

"This bottle is called the Eye of the Spirit. Barks and leaves of drago and poplar trees are sun-dried for seven days and decocted thrice. Then, they are immersed in Lanti Wine. Of course, there would be several incantations while we're at it…" As Daly described the liquid, the amber substance dripped onto the cobalt blue candle flame.

Upon smelling the ethereal scent of the aromatic wine, Klein noticed that the candle flame was dancing wildly. The luster of Daly's blue eyeshadow and blush shone oddly, to the extent of him seeing double.

"It is a great helping hand for mediumship. It is also a floral essence that is sufficiently enchanting…"

As Daly explained continuously, Klein felt as if her voice was coming from all around.

Bewildered, Klein looked around and realized that everything was swaying and in a blur. He felt like he was shrouded by layers and layers of fog. Even his body was swaying as it phased away before he began floating and then losing his balance.

Colors blended like an impressionist painting—the reds were redder, the blues were bluer, and the blacks were blacker—appearing more defined than usual. It was dreamy and hazy. Distinct murmurs from the surroundings came through as if hundreds and thousands of people who could not be seen were debating.

"This feels similar to the luck enhancement ritual I did before, but without the kind of madness that makes your head feel like exploding…" Klein looked around and thought questioningly.

At this moment, his vision was locked onto a pair of eyes that were crystal clear like emerald. On a blurry "sofa" sat Daly in a black robe. Eccentrically, her gaze concentrated on the tip of Klein's head. She smiled and in a gentle voice, said, "Let me properly introduce myself. I am the Spirit Medium, Daly."

I can still… have rational thoughts… It's like when I was at that luck enhancement ritual and that gathering… The thought crossed Klein's mind as he intentionally behaved muddled and said, "Hello there…"

"The mental worlds of humans are extremely vast. Many secrets are hidden within the mind. Look at the ocean—what we know about it is all on the superficial level. But in reality, deep in the ocean, there is a larger unseen portion. Other than islands, there is the entire ocean. There is the boundless sky that symbolizes the spiritual world…

"You are the spirit of your body. Not only do you know of the islands above, but you also know of the things hidden beneath the sea, as well as the entire ocean…

"Anything that exists leaves some traces behind. The superficial memories of the islands may be wiped out, but what is left under the sea and the entire ocean will definitely have a corresponding projection left in it…"

Daly went on and on, bewitching Klein. The vague surrounding winds and shadows took on similar forms. It as though Klein's spirit was fully exposed in the form of an ocean, waiting for him to search and discover.

Klein watched patiently, as he 'churned' the ocean occasionally. Then, in an airy voice, he replied, "No… I can't remember… I have forgotten…"

He expressed his agony at just the right level.

Daly tried to guide him once again, but the clear-headed Klein was unaffected.

"Okay. We shall end here. You may leave."

"Leave."

"Leave…”

The airy voice lingered and Daly disappeared. The wind and shadows began calming as the ethereal smell and subtle scent of the aromatic wine became more distinct again.

The colors returned to their normal state and the fuzzy feeling was no longer around. Klein's body quivered, and he found his balance again.

He opened his eyes, which he had no memory of closing, and noticed that the candle with the bright blue flame was still before him. Dunn Smith was still resting comfortably on the couch. Same for Daly with the black-hooded robe.

"Why did you use the theory that belongs to that bunch of evil madmen, the Psychology Alchemists?" Dunn furrowed his eyebrows and stared at Daly.

As Daly put away the two little bottles, she replied calmly, "I think it's pretty accurate. At least, it corresponds with some of the things I've made contact with before…”

Without waiting for Dunn's reply, Daly shrugged and said, "This tricky fellow did not leave a single trace behind."

Upon hearing this, Klein heaved a huge sigh of relief. Pretentiously, he asked, "Oh, it's over? What happened? It felt like I just took a nap…”

That was a pass, right?

Thankfully, I had the 'luck enhancement ritual' as a rehearsal!

"Just take it as such." Dunn interrupted him and looked at Daly. "Have you examined Welch's and Naya's bodies?"

"The corpses can tell us a lot more than you can imagine. It's such a pity that Welch and Naya had indeed committed suicide. So, the force that drove them to it is to be feared. Not a single trace was left behind." Daly stood up and pointed at the candle. "I need some rest."

The cobalt blue glow vanished, and the house was instantly inundated with a blurry shade of crimson.

…

"Congratulations. You can return home now. But do remember, do not reveal this incident to your loved ones. You have to promise this." Dunn said as he led Klein to the door.

Surprised, Klein asked, "Is there no need to examine the curses or the trails left behind by the evil spirits?"

"Daly didn't mention anything about it, so there's no need for it," Dunn answered simply.

Klein calmed down. As the thought of his previous worries came to mind, he asked hurriedly, "How can I be sure that I will be free from trouble from now on?"

"No worries." Dunn twitched his lips and said, "Based on statistics of similar incidents in the past, eighty percent of the survivors of the incident do not experience any horrifying after-effects. Yeah… This is based on what I know… roughly… more or less…"

"Then… there's still one fifth of those poor souls…" Klein did not dare to try his luck.

"Then you can consider joining us as a civilian staff. This way, even if there are any precursors, we can discover it in time," Dunn said casually as he approached the carriage. "Or simply become a Beyonder. After all, we are not nannies. We can't babysit you all day long and even watch what you do with women."

"Can I?" Klein questioned the statement.

Of course, he did not expect much. After all, how was it even possible to be a part of the Nighthawks so easily and obtain the power of the Beyonders?

That was the power of the Beyonders!

Dunn paused, and turned his head sideways to look at him.

"It's not that you can't… It depends…”

What? The transition in his words shocked Klein. Klein stared blankly beside the carriage before answering, "Really?"

Who are you kidding? Is it so easy to become a Beyonder?

Dunn laughed lightly; his gray eyes were hidden in the shadow of the carriage.

"You don't believe me, huh? Actually, when you become a Nighthawk you lose a lot. For instance, freedom.

"Even if we don't talk about this now, there is another issue. Firstly, you are not a member of the clergy, nor a devotee. You can't pick whatever you want or choose the safest approach."

"And secondly…” Dunn held onto the handle and hopped onto the carriage as he went on. "Among the cases that we—us, the Mandated Punishers, the Machinery Hivemind and other Judiciaries—have to deal with annually, a quarter of them were a result of Beyonders who lost control."

A quarter… Beyonders who lost control… Klein was dumbfounded.

Just then, Dunn turned slightly. His gray eyes were deep. With no sign of a smile, he continued, "And among the quarter of cases, a large number of them are our teammates."

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CHAPTER 15
THE INVITATION

A wave of tumultuous emotions rose up in Klein's heart after he heard Dunn. Instinctively, he uttered, "Why?"

The Beyonders have serious hidden dangers? So much so that the Church's internal Judiciary and the Beyonders, who dealt with bizarre phenomenon, are also prone to problems?

Dunn stepped into the carriage and sat back in his seat. His expression and tone remained the same.

"This is not something that you need to understand. Neither is it something you can understand, unless you become one of us."

Klein was struck dumb for a moment, after which he sat down and questioned in a tone that was half dubious and half-joking.

"If I don't come to understand, how is it possible for me to make a decision to join?"

And not joining would mean Klein could not understand. This would end in a deadlock…

Dunn Smith took out the pipe once again, placed it against his nose, and took a whiff.

"You probably misunderstood; a civilian staff member is also one of us."

"In other words, as long as I become one of your civilian staff members, I will be able to understand the relevant secrets, figure out the hidden dangers that plague Beyonders, and the dangers that may be encountered, as well as consider whether I want to become a Beyonder later?" Klein reorganized his thoughts and paraphrased what Dunn had shared.

Dunn smiled and said, "Yes, that is the case, except for one point. You cannot simply become a Beyonder just because you want to because every church will be equally strict in this aspect."

It would be odd if the churches were not strict… Klein lampooned silently, as he added with a more intense tone coupled with stronger body language, "What about civilian staff members? This should be quite strict as well, right?"

"There shouldn't be any problems if it's you," said Dunn with half-closed eyelids as he whiffed the pipe with partially relaxed countenance. However, he did not ignite it.

"Why?" Klein asked as he was once again grappled by doubt.

At the same time, he jested inwardly.

So my uniqueness and halo as a transmigrator are akin to the fireflies in the night, ever so bright and outstanding?

Dunn opened his half-closed eyelids, his silver-colored eyes reflecting the same tranquility as before.

"First, you managed to survive without our help in such a situation. Certain exceptional qualities are not present in others. For instance, luck. Lucky people are often welcomed."

Seeing that Klein's expression had turned blank, Dunn smiled slightly.

"All right, just treat this as a humorous statement. Second, you're a graduate of the history department from Khoy University; this is something we urgently need. Although a believer of the Lord of the Storms, Leumi, perceives women in a way that is loathsome, his views regarding society, humanities, economics, and politics remain incisive. He said before that talents are key to maintaining a competitive advantage and positive development, a point that I very much agree with.

Noticing that Klein was slightly furrowing his eyebrows, Dunn casually explained, "You should be able to imagine that we often encounter documents and objects from the Fourth Epoch or earlier. Many cults and heretics have tried to gain power from these things. Sometimes, they themselves can lead to strange and terrible things.

"Except for the Beyonders in special fields, most of us are not good with our studies, or have passed that age." Having said that, Dunn Smith pointed to his own head, and the corner of his mouth turned up slightly as if he was mocking himself.

He then said, "Those dry, boring knowledge always puts us to sleep. Even the Sleepless can't help it. In the past, we would cooperate with historians or archaeologists, but this posed the risk of exposing secrets, and mishaps might befall on these otherwise uninvolved professors and associate professors. Thus, the addition of a professional in our ranks is hard to refuse."

Klein nodded lightly and accepted Dunn's explanation. With his thoughts all over the place, he asked, "Then why don't you directly, um, groom one?"

Dunn continued, "This brings me to the third point, which is also the final and most important point. You've already been through a similar ordeal, so inviting you doesn't violate the confidentiality clause.

"With regard to developing others, I will bear the responsibility of exposure if it fails. Most of our team members, our civilian staff members, come from within the Church."

After Klein finished listening silently, he asked curiously, "Why are you so strict about maintaining confidentiality? Wouldn't spreading the news publicly to more people and increasing awareness lessen the chances of a similar mistake from happening again? The greatest fear stems from the fear of the unknown; we can make the unknown become known."

"No, humanity's stupidity is beyond your imagination. It actually leads to more people emulating these acts, creating more chaos and more severe incidents," Dunn Smith shook his head and replied.

Klein acknowledged as he replied in enlightenment, "The only lesson that humans can learn from history is that humans do not gain any lessons from history, and they're always repeating the same tragedies."

"That famous quote from Emperor Roselle is indeed filled with much philosophical meaning," agreed Dunn.

…Emperor Roselle said that? This transmigrator senior really did not give the 'latecomers' any chance to posture… Klein did not know how to follow up on Dunn's words.

Dunn turned his head and gazed out of the horse carriage. The dim yellowish light of the street lamps intertwined to display the splendor of civilization.

“…There is a similar discourse within the judiciary of the major churches. This may be the main reason for the strict confidentiality and the prohibition of ordinary people from knowing."

"What is it?" Klein asked as his interest was piqued, pleasured that he seemed to be spying on secrets.

Dunn turned his head; his facial muscles pulled themselves so slightly that it was hardly visible.

"Faith and fear bring troubles. More faith and more fear bring more troubles, until everything is destroyed."

After he said that, Dunn signed, "Besides praying for the blessings and help from gods, humans can't solve their real major problems.

"Faith and fear bring troubles. More faith and more fear bring more troubles…" Klein recited silently, but he could not fully understand it.

What followed next was the fear of uncertainty that came from the unknown. It was like the dark shadows formed by the street lights outside. In the darkness without light, it appeared as though there were pairs of callous-looking eyes and wide-opened mouths.

As the horse galloped vigorously and nimbly while the wheels of the horse carriage reeled on ahead with Iron Cross Street in sight, Dunn broke the silence suddenly and formally invited Klein.

"Would you like to join us as a civilian staff member?"

In Klein's mind, multiple thoughts surfaced, making him indecisive. He contemplated and asked, "Can I have some time to consider?"

Since this matter had serious implications, he could not hastily and recklessly make the decision.

"No problem, just give me a reply before Sunday," Dunn nodded and added. "Of course, remember to keep this a secret and don't disclose the information regarding Welch to anyone, including your brother and sister. Once this is violated, it'll not only bring them trouble, but you might also have to attend a special court."

"Okay," Klein answered gravely.

The carriage was once again plunged into silence.

Seeing that they were nearing Iron Cross Street and that he was almost reaching home, Klein suddenly thought of a question. He hesitated for a few seconds before asking, "Mr Smith, what kind of salary and benefits do civilian staff get?"

This was a serious question…

Taken aback momentarily, Dunn smiled instantly and answered, "There's no need for you to worry about this issue. Our funds are guaranteed by the Church and the police department. For newly registered civilian staffs, the weekly salaries are placed at two pounds and ten soli. There is an additional ten soli as compensation for the risk and confidentiality. All of this will add up to a total of three pounds. This is hardly worse than a confirmed university lecturer.

"Afterwhich, your salary will gradually rise according to your experience and contributions.

"As for civilian staff members, the contract is generally five years. After five years, you can quit normally if you're no longer willing to stay. You only have to sign a lifetime confidentiality agreement and you're not allowed to leave Tingen until permission is given. If you want to move to another city, the first thing you must do is register with the local Nighthawk.

"By the way, there are no weekends and you can only work in shifts. At any point in time, there should be three civilian staffs on duty and if you wish to go to the South or Desi Bay for a vacation, you'll need to arrange it with your colleagues."

Just as Dunn finished speaking, the horse carriage pulled to a stop and the apartment building where Klein and his siblings resided in appeared on the side.

"I get it now," Klein turned around and walked down the horse carriage. He stopped at the side and asked, "By the way Mr. Smith, where do I find you

after I've come to my decision?"

Dunn gave a deep and low throaty laugh before saying, "Go to the 'Hound Pub' at Besik Street and find their boss, Wright. Tell him that you want to hire a small mercenary squad for a mission."

"Huh?" Klein asked confusedly.

"Our location is confidential too. Before you agree to become one of us, I can't tell you directly. Alright Mr. Klein Moretti, I wish you a good dream tonight as well," Dunn smiled as he said.

Klein took off his hat and saluted, watching as the pace of the departing horse carriage gradually sped up.

He took out his pocket watch.

"Click," he pressed it open and saw that it was only a little past four in the morning. The street was filled with a relaxing, cool breeze. A dim yellowish light from the street lamps illuminated the surroundings.

Klein drew a deep breath and took in the deep silence of the night around him.

The busiest and noisiest district in the day could be so lifeless and quiet at night. This was in stark contrast to the silent observations and medium's seance in Welch's residence.

It was only then that Klein realized that the back of his linen shirt was unknowingly drenched in sweat, cold and clammy.

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CHAPTER 16
RAT-BAITING WITH DOGS

Phew, I finally got through the round with the medium…

Klein let out a foul breath. He slowly turned around and enjoyed the cool breeze and tranquility of the night while walking closer and closer to the apartment building's door.

He took out his keys, inserted the correct one in and turned it gently, allowing the crimson-mixed darkness to expand with the creaking sound of the opened door.

Walking on the staircase without a single person in sight and taking in the cold air, Klein had an inexplicable and amazing feeling. It felt like he had a few more hours than others. This caused him to hasten his pace.

In a similar state of mind, he opened the door to his room and before he even stepped inside, he saw a silhouette sitting silently in front of his desk. It had reddish black hair, bright brown eyes, and a delicate, pretty face. Undoubtedly, she was Melissa Moretti!

"Klein, where did you go?" Melissa asked curiously as she relaxed her eyebrows.

Without waiting for Klein's reply, she added, "Just now, I got up to go to the bathroom and realized you weren't home." It was as if she wanted to know everything clearly, from the causes and effects of the matter to the underlying logic.

With great experience at lying to his parents, Klein's brain took a spin before he gave a bitter smile and calmly replied, "I couldn't fall asleep again after I woke up. Instead of wasting time, I decided that I should train my body. So I went out to run a few rounds. Look at my sweat!"

He took off his jacket and half-turned his body, pointing to his back.

Melissa stood up, took a glance half-heartedly and deliberated for a few moments before saying, "Honestly speaking, Klein, you don't have to stress yourself out. I'm sure you can pass the interview to Tingen University. Even if you can't, er—I mean *if* —you can still find better ones."

I haven't even thought about the interview… Klein nodded his head and said, "I understand."

He did not mention the "offer" that he had gotten because he had not decided whether he wanted to join them or not.

Staring at Klein intensely, Melissa suddenly turned around and trotted into the interior of the house. She took out an object that resembled a tortoise. It was comprised of items like gears, rusted iron, torsion springs and ordinary springs.

After quickly tightening the torsion spring, Melissa placed the object on the desk.

Ka! Ka! Ka!

Dum! Dum! Dum!

The "tortoise" moved and jumped with a rhythm that could pull anyone's attention.

"Whenever I feel irritated, I feel much better seeing it move. I've been doing this very often recently and it's very effective! Klein, give it a try!" invited Melissa as her eyes brightened.

Klein did not turn down his sister's goodwill. He approached the "tortoise" and waited for it to stop before laughing. He said, "Simplicity and regularity can indeed help relaxation."

Without waiting for Melissa's reply, Klein pointed to the "tortoise" and casually asked, "Did you make this yourself? When did you make this? Why wasn't I aware of it?"

"I made use of unwanted materials from school and things picked up from the streets to make this. It was only finished two days ago," Melissa said in her usual tone, the side of her lips upturned a few more degrees.

"That's impressive," Klein praised sincerely.

As a boy with poor skills in machine assembly, he encountered great difficulties even assembling a four-wheel toy car as a child.

With her chin slightly raised and her eyes slightly bent, Melissa calmly replied, "It was okay."

"Being overly humble is a bad trait," Klein smiled slightly and continued, "This is a tortoise, right?"

Instantly, the atmosphere in the room took a great plunge, leaving behind an air of graveness for a while. Then, Melissa faintly replied with a voice that seemed enigmatic like the crimson veil, "It's a puppet."

Puppet…

Klein gave an awkward smile, and tried to forcefully explain, "The problem lies in the materials, they're too rudimentary."

Following that, he tried to change the topic and said, "Why would you go to the bathroom in the middle of the night? Isn't there a toilet here? Don't you always sleep till dawn?"

Melissa was taken aback momentarily.

It was only after a few seconds, before she opened her mouth, prepared to explain.

At that moment, an intense sound of digestion sounded from her thoracoabdominal [1] area.

"I-I'll go get some more sleep!"

Bang! She grabbed her tortoise-like "puppet", trotted to the interior of the house, and closed the door to her room.

Last night's dinner was too good, she ate too much and now her stomach is having trouble digesting it… Klein shook his head as he smiled, slowly walking towards his desk. He sat down soundlessly, silently pondering Dunn Smith's invitation as the crimson red moon emerged from behind the dark clouds.

Being a Nighthawk civilian staff member had its apparent disadvantages.

With me being a transmigrator, "The Fool"—initiator of the mysterious Gathering—and the multiple secrets I have, it will be risky to be under the noses of the Church of the Evernight Goddess's team that specializes in dealing with matters regarding the Beyonders.

As long as I join Dunn Smith and his team, I would certainly aim to become a Beyonder. I could then cover up the benefits gained from the Gathering.

Yet, becoming a formal member would entail many restrictions on my freedom, like how a civilian staff has to report his leaving of Tingen. No longer would I be able to go wherever I want or do whatever I want. I would miss many opportunities.

The Nighthawks are a strict organization. Once a mission is given, I can only wait for the arrangements and accept orders. There is no room for rejection.

Beyonders have the risk of losing control.

…

Having all the disadvantages listed out one by one, Klein turned to considering the necessities and advantages:

Judging from the situation of the luck enhancement ritual, I'm not one of the eighty percent of lucky people. In the future, there is bound to be some bizarre event happening to me, increasing the dangers I face.

Only by becoming one of the Beyonders or by joining the Nighthawks can I be equipped with the ability to resist.

The wish to become a Beyonder cannot be solely reliant on the Gathering. The potion formula is not a major problem, but where can I find the corresponding materials? How am I to obtain and concoct them?

Not forgetting the nous of daily practice, I'm faced with serious obstacles! It is just not possible for me to consult Justice and The Hanged Man on every matter and exchange every object with them. This would not only hurt the image of The Fool and arouse their suspicions, but there will also be inadequate time to communicate on such trivial issues.

Similarly, I am unable to produce anything that can pique their interest.

Besides, more materials would more often than not leave behind the trail of my real identity. Then, "online disputes" would effectively be transformed into "offline conflicts," bringing about immense troubles.

By joining the Nighthawks, there would definitely be contact with the common knowledge of the world of mystery and relevant channels. This can

sufficiently accumulate into a corresponding social circle and can be used as leverage. Only then can I initiate the Gathering and in turn gain the greatest benefits from Justice and The Hanged Man. In reality, the gains can feedback into reality, allowing me to obtain more resources and form a virtuous cycle.

Of course, I could also go to an organization that is suppressed by the various Churches such as the Psychology Alchemists mentioned by Dunn and join them.

Yet I'll also lose my freedom, and be in a constant state of fear and anxiety. However, more importantly, I have no idea where to look for them. Even if I manage to gain the corresponding information from The Hanged Man, such rash contact with them could endanger my life.

Becoming a civilian staff leaves opportunity for a buffer and exit.

The inferior recluse hides away in the wild; the superior, the crowd. Perhaps the identity as a Nighthawk can be a better cover.

In the future, when I become one of the top authorities of the tribunal, who would imagine that I am a heretic, the head of the secret organization who is working behind the scenes?

…

As the first rays of the morning sun shone, the crimson disappeared. Gazing at the golden light on the horizons of the sky, Klein made up his mind.

He would find Dunn Smith today and become part of the Nighthawk's civilian staff!

At this moment, Melissa, who had gotten out of bed again, had pushed open the door to the room. She was surprised to see her brother stretching in an unglamorous manner. "You didn't sleep?"

"I was thinking through some things." Klein smiled, feeling relaxed.

Melissa thought for a moment and said, "Whenever I encounter problems, I'll list out both the pros and cons one by one and compare them. After that, I would be able to get a hint of what I should do next."

"That's a good habit. I did that too," Klein smiled and replied.

Melissa's countenance was relaxed, and she did not add more. Holding a yellowish sheet of paper and her toiletries, she headed to the bathroom.

Not in a hurry to leave after he finished his breakfast and his sister's departure, Klein took a good nap. Based on what he knew, nearly all the pubs were closed in the morning.

At two o'clock in the afternoon, he smoothed the pleats of his silk hat and handkerchief using a small brush. He also removed the dirt to reestablish the tidiness.

Thereafter, he wore a suit of formal clothing, just like he was going for an interview.

Besik Street was a little far, and Klein was afraid that he would miss the "working hours" of the Nighthawk. Therefore, he did not walk there, but instead waited for public horse carriage at Iron Cross Street.

In the Loen Kingdom, public horse carriages were placed under two categories—without track and with track.

The former consisted of a carriage drawn by two horses and could sit approximately 20 people while taking into account the top of the carriage. Only a general route existed, without specific stations. It had flexible operations and could be hailed anywhere unless it was full.

The latter was operated by the Orbital Carriage Company. First, a rail-like service device was laid on the main street. The horses would move on the

inner lane while the wheels ran on the tracks, making it easier and more labor-saving. This could thus pull a bigger double-decker carriage that sat nearly fifty passengers.

However, the only problem was that the route and stations were fixed, making many places inaccessible.

After ten minutes, the sound of the wheels hitting the tracks approached from a distance. A double-decker horse carriage stopped in front of the station at Iron Cross Street.

"To Besik Street," Klein said to the carriage driver.

"You have to transfer at Champagne Street but when you get there, it takes about ten minutes to walk to Besik Street," explained the carriage driver to Klein, with regards to the route.

"Let's go to Champagne Street then." Klein nodded in approval.

"It's more than four kilometers, four pence", said a young man with a fair and clean face, as he extended his hand.

He was a worker responsible for money collection.

"Okay." Klein fished out four copper coins from his pocket and handed it to the other party.

He walked up to the carriage and found that there were not many passengers. Even on the first floor, there were a few empty seats.

"I only have three pence on me now, so I can only walk when I go back…" Klein pressed his hat down and sat down firmly.

On this floor, the men and women were mostly well-dressed although there were a few clothed in their work clothes, leisurely reading newspapers. Almost no one spoke, and it was quite quiet.

Klein shut his eyes and recharged his strength, oblivious to the coming and going of passengers around him.

Station after station passed until he finally heard the few words "Champagne Street."

After alighting the horse carriage, he inquired along the way and soon reached Besik Street, where he saw the pub with the brownish-yellow hound logo.

Klein reached out his right hand and gave a forceful push. The heavy door gradually opened, inundating him with a wave of uproarious noises and an impetuous heat wave.

Although it was still afternoon, there were already many customers in the pub. Some were temporary workers, looking for opportunities here, waiting to be hired. Others were simply idling around, numbing themselves with alcohol.

The pub was dimly lit. In the center, there were two large iron cages with a third of its bottom sinking deep into the ground without any gaps.

People held wooden wine cups and surrounded it, sometimes discussing loudly while laughing, sometimes cursing loudly.

Giving a curious glance, Klein found two dogs caged inside. One was black and white, similar to the husky found on Earth. The other was wholly black, with shiny fur, making it look healthy and fierce.

"Do you want to bet? Doug has won eight games in a row!" said a little man wearing a brown beret, as he neared Klein and pointed to the black dog.

Bet? Taken aback at first, Klein regained his senses immediately.

"Dog-fighting?"

When he was at Khoy University, those aristocratic and wealthy students would always ask him contemptuously and curiously, if the boorish workers and unemployed hooligans enjoyed participating in boxing and gambling at the pubs.

Besides being able to gamble on boxing and card games, didn't it also include cruel and bloody activities like cock-fighting, dog-fighting, and others?

The short man smirked. "Mister, we're civilized people. We don't engage in such unglamorous activities."

Having said that, he whispered, "Besides, laws were introduced to ban these things last year…”

"Then what are y'all betting on?" asked Klein curiously.

"The better hunter." Just as the short man finished his sentence, a resounding cacophony sounded.

He turned his head, waved his hands excitedly, and said, "You can't place a bet for this round as it has started, wait for the next one then."

Upon hearing that, Klein tipped his toes, lifted his head, and looked as far as he could.

He saw two strong men each dragging a sack, coming to the side of the iron cage and opening the "prison door." They then dumped the contents of the sack into the cage.

There were gray and disgusting animals!

Klein tried to identify them carefully before realizing that they were rats. Hundreds of rats!

As the iron cage was deep underground without any gaps, the rats moved in all directions but could not find a way out.

Right then, just as the door of the cage was closed, the chain of the two dogs were untied.

"Woof!" The black dog pounced ahead and killed a rat in one bite.

The black-and-white dog was dazed at first before it started playing excitedly with the rats.

The surrounding people either raised their wine cups and intensified their gaze or shouted loudly, "Bite it! Kill it!"

"Doug, Doug!"

*Motherf**king rat-baiting with dogs* $^{2}\cdots$ Klein regained his senses and the corner of his mouth twitched unceasingly.

The objective of the gamble is to determine which dog can catch more rats…

Perhaps, one can even bet on the specific number of rats caught…

No wonder there were people purchasing live rats at Iron Cross Street…

That's really unique…

Klein shook his head, laughing as he backtracked, and circled along the edge of the alcoholic customers, and reached the front of the bar.

"New here?" said the bartender as he spared Klein a glance while wiping the cups. He continued, "One cup of rye beer is a penny. Enmat beer, costs two pence. Four pence for Southville beer, or do you want a cup of purely brewed malt Lanti?"

"I came here for Mr. Wright," said Klein directly and bluntly.

The bartender whistled and shouted to the side, "Old Man, someone is looking for you."

"Oh, who…" A vague voice sounded, and an intoxicated old man stood up from behind the bar.

He rubbed his eyes, shifted his gaze to Klein and asked, "Lad, were you looking for me?"

"Mr. Wright, I would like to hire a small mercenary squad for a mission," replied Klein, according to what Dunn had instructed.

"A small mercenary squad? Are you living in an adventure story? This hasn't been around for a long time!" the bartender interrupted and smiled.

Wright went silent for a few second before saying, "Who told you to look for it here?"

"Dunn. Dunn Smith," replied Klein in all honesty.

Instantly, Wright broke out in a chuckle and replied, "I see. Actually, the small mercenary squad still exists. It's just in another form, with a more contemporary name. You can find it on the second floor of No. 36 Zouteland Street."

"Thank you," thanked Klein sincerely before he turned and squeezed out of the pub.

Before he went out the pub, the alcoholic customers who surrounded him suddenly quieted down, as they murmured, "Doug was actually defeated…"

"Defeated…"

Klein smiled and shook his head. Then he left quickly and found his way to the nearby Zoeterland Street after asking around.

"30, 32, 34… Here," he counted the house numbers and walked into the stairwell.

Going around the corner and slowly climbing up the stairs, he saw the vertical sign with the current name of the so-called small mercenary squad.

"Blackthorn Security Company."

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CHAPTER 17
SPECIAL OPERATIONS DEPARTMENT

"Blackthorn Security Company."

Upon seeing the signboard, Klein felt surprised yet found it reasonable.

Man… what do I say about this… He shook his head and laughed before walking up the steps and knocking gently on the half-closed door with his right hand.

Knock! Knock! Knock!

The sound echoed slowly but rhythmically, but there was no response; only a faint sputtering sound could be heard.

Knock! Knock! Knock!

Klein repeated, only to be met with the same outcome.

He switched to pushing the door, making the gap larger as he stared inside —a classic sofa which might have been for serving guests, a soft fabric armchair, and a burly wood coffee table. There was a girl with brown hair behind a table right across with her head drooped.

Even though "Security Company" is just a guise, isn't this just… just too "unprofessional?" How long has this place been out of business? Right, you guys don't need any business… Klein drew closer as he complained silently and knocked on the table just beside the girl's ear.

Knock! Knock!

The brown-haired girl sat up immediately and swiftly took the newspaper in front of her, covering her face.

Tingen City Honest Paper… Nice name… Klein silently read the title of the page facing him.

"The steam train service 'Soaring Express' that directly reaches Constant City is starting operations today… Oh come on, when will there be one that goes straight to Brindisi Bay. I really don't want to take the ship there again, it's too awful, really awful… Hey, who are you?" The girl with brown hair read pretentiously and gave her opinion. As she spoke, she lowered the newspaper and revealed her bright forehead and light-brown eyes, looking at Klein with a fawning and startled look.

"Hello, I am Klein Moretti, and I am here at the invitation of Dunn Smith," Klein said as he took down his hat to his chest and bowed slightly.

The brown-haired girl looked to be in her early twenties. She wore a light green, Loen-styled dress. She was set off with beautiful laces on her sleeves, collar, and chest.

"The Captain… alright, wait here for a moment. I'll go get him." The girl scurried up and went into the room beside her.

She didn't even serve a cup of water or anything… The level of service awareness is worrying… Klein smiled faintly as he waited at his spot.

After two to three minutes, the brown-haired girl opened the door and came out. She said with a sweet smile, "Mr. Moretti, please follow me. The Captain is on watch at the 'Chanis Gate' and is unable to leave at the moment."

"Okay." Klein quickly followed behind. In his mind, he pondered to himself.

Chanis Gate, what could that be?

Going through the partition, the first thing he saw was a small corridor, with only three offices on each side.

Some of these offices were locked tight, while some were opened, revealing someone on the inside who typed non-stop on a heavy mechanical typewriter.

At a glance, Klein noticed a familiar figure: the young officer that had investigated his apartment, the one with the black hair, green eyes, and romantic vibe of a poet.

He was not in official wear; his white collared shirt was not tucked in, making for quite an unruly appearance.

Perhaps he really is a poet… Klein nodded in greeting and was greeted with a smile.

The brown-haired girl pushed opened the left office door at the end of the room and pointed inside, chirping, "We still have to go down a few levels."

This office had no furniture in place, only a grayish-white stone staircase that extended downwards.

The two sides of the stairs were lit up by gas lamps. The stable glow dispelled the darkness and gave a sense of harmony.

The brown-haired girl walked in front, staring at her feet while walking carefully.

"Although I walk here often, I am still constantly afraid of falling down, tumbling down like a barrel. You don't know, Leonard did such a folly. On the first day of becoming a 'Sleepless'—the first day where he had not mastered his new powers—he tried to rush down the flight of stairs. And-and he became a cartwheel. Haha, it was hilarious if you think about it. Oh

yes, it was the guy that greeted you just now. This was about three years ago. Speaking of which, I have been with the Nighthawks for five years; I was only seventeen when I joined…”

The girl watched her steps as she spoke. Suddenly, she smacked her forehead and said, "I forgot to introduce myself! I'm Rozanne. My father was a member of the Nighthawks, who sacrificed himself in an accident five years ago. I suppose we are colleagues from now on— Err, yeah 'colleague' is the right word… we are not teammates since we are not Beyonders."

"I hope to have the honor, but still it depends on what Mr. Smith has to say," Klein said as he sized up the enclosed surroundings. He felt that they were going underground—dampness seeped out from the stone walls, dispelling the summer heat.

"Don't worry, the fact that you came so far means the Captain has agreed. I've always been a little afraid of him, even though he is amiable, a fatherly figure. I don't know why but I'm still afraid." Rozanne spoke as though there was a piece of sweet in her throat.

Klein answered humorously, "Isn't being afraid of a father normal?"

"True." Rozanne said as she held the wall around the bend.

As they spoke, the two finished walking down the stairs and reached a stone-paved floor.

It was a long aisle; both sides of the walls were mounted with gas lamps surrounded by metal gratings. Klein and Rozanne's shadows were elongated under the illumination.

Klein keenly noticed that there was a "Dark Sacred Emblem" every few meters—the symbol of the Evernight Goddess. A deep black background dotted with sparkling embellishments, as they clustered precisely half the crimson moon.

These emblems did not seem special, but walking between them gave Klein a sense of serenity. Rozanne also stopped talking, unlike her previous talkative state.

Before long, an intersection appeared up front. Rozanne briefly introduced,

"The path to the left will lead to the Saint Selena Cathedral; to the right are the armory, storeroom, and archives. And straight ahead is the Chanis Gate."

Saint Selena Cathedral? Then, Zouteland Street is just behind Red Moonlight Street? Klein was a little stunned.

Saint Selena Cathedral of Red Moonlight Street was the headquarters of the Church of the Evernight Goddess in Tingen, a sacred ground where local followers yearned to visit. Along with "Holy Numerics Cathedral" of the Church of the God of Steam and Machinery in the suburbs, and the "River and Sea Cathedral" of the Church of the Lord of Storms in North Tingen, they sustained the religious circles in Tingen City and its affiliated towns and villages.

Aware that his status made it unsuitable for him to ask more, Klein only listened silently.

They passed the intersection and moved straight ahead. In less than a minute, a black iron split gate carved with seven sacred emblems were seen.

It stood there, heavy, cold and domineering, like a giant guarding in the darkness.

"Chanis Gate." Rozanne reminded him and pointed at the room beside them, saying, "Captain is inside. Go on in by yourself."

"Alright, thank you." Klein replied politely.

The room Rozanne was referring to was just in front of "Chanis Gate." The windows were opened, revealing the lit room inside. Klein took a deep breath to calm himself.

Knock! Knock! Knock!

"Come in." He heard Dunn Smith's deep and amiable voice.

Klein opened the unlatched door gently. There was only a table and four chairs inside. Dunn Smith with his high hairline, who was wearing the black coat from the previous night plus a gold watch chain around his chest, was reading the newspaper leisurely.

"Come and have a seat. Have you decided? Are you certain you want to join us?" Dunn smiled and asked as he put down the newspaper.

Klein removed his hat and bowed, then he sat beside the table and said, "Yes, I am certain."

"Then take a look at this deed, heh heh. People like to call it a contract now." Dunn pulled out the table drawer and took out two contract copies.

There were not many clauses, and most of them had been mentioned by Dunn Smith. The emphasis was on the confidential clause. Violators were tried in the tribunal courts of the Church of the Evernight Goddess instead of the kingdom's courts. It was akin to how soldiers and officers were sent to court martial for trials.

A five year contract… Two pounds and ten soli for weekly wages, ten soli as compensation for the risk and confidentiality… Klein read through it and answered resolutely, "I've no problem with it."

"Then sign it," Dunn said as he pointed to the dark red fountain pen and ink.

Klein used a piece of waste paper to try out the pen before drawing a breath. He signed on both contracts with his name: Klein Moretti.

As he did not have a stamp yet, he could only use his thumbprint.

Dunn received the contract, took out a stamp from the drawer, and stamped on the end of the contract and a few key parts.

With that done, he stood up and returned a contract with one hand, and reached for Klein with the other saying, "Welcome, from now on, you are one of us, and please note that the contract is confidential as well."

Klein stood up as well. He received the contract, shook his hand, and said, "So, I shall be addressing you as Captain?"

"Yes." Dunn's grayish eyes seemed especially deep in the dim surroundings.

After shaking hands, they sat down. Klein glanced at the stamp on the contract, it read: "Nighthawks Squad, Tingen City, Awwa County, Loen Kingdom."

"I can't believe you guys would use the name 'Blackthorn Security Company' as a disguise," he laughed and said.

"Actually, we have other signboards." Dunn pulled out a piece of paper from the drawer.

It was stamped with the stamps of the city government and the police department. The content were as follows: "Seventh Unit, Special Operations Department, Awwa County Police, Loen Kingdom."

"The first four units are the regular police responsible for general security, like the VIP Protection Unit and Key Installations Protection Unit. And from unit five onwards are the ones dealing with supernatural incidents in each city. Our unit is responsible for incidents related to the followers of Evernight Goddess in Tingen. If there are different types of followers, then we divide the area accordingly; we are mainly in charge of places like the north, west and the Golden Indus region."

Dunn briefly introduced, "Unit Six of the Mandated Punisher squad under the Church of the Lord of Storms is in charge of the pier region, the east, and the south. The university area and the suburbs are under Unit Five, which is the Machinery Hivemind squad in Tingen."

"Right." Klein had no questions about it. He then laughed. "What happens if someone really comes here due to the 'Blackthorn Security Company' signboard and requests for our services?"

"We'll take those requests; why shouldn't we? As long as it doesn't affect our daily operations," Dunn said slowly and humorously. "Any earnings would be considered additional bonuses, so our members are quite willing to take those jobs. Anyway, the market for trivial and troublesome matters such as finding dogs and cats have been monopolized by private detectives."

"So how many people are there in this Nighthawks squad?" Klein asked since they were on this topic.

"There aren't many supernatural incidents, so there are even fewer Beyonders. There are only six formal members of the Nighthawks in the entire Tingen City, including me. Heh heh, as for civilian staff, there are six including you."

Klein nodded his head, and eventually asked the question that he was most concerned about, "So, Captain, what do you mean by Beyonders losing control? Why does it happen?"

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CHAPTER 18
ORIGIN AND CAUSE

Upon hearing Klein's question, Dunn looked out of the window toward the corridor that led to Chanis Gate. He took out his pipe, stuffed it with some tobacco and mint leaves, and held it to his nose. He took a deep whiff as his voice turned reflective and drifting.

"Only at home can I enjoy the beautiful flavors of tobacco mixed with mint leaves without any worries… Klein, do you know about the creation myth?"

"Of course, when I received primary education during Sunday school, we learned to read using The Revelation of Evernight. Among them, the Book of Wisdom and the Letters from the Saints mentioned the myth of creation." Klein attempted to recall via the memory fragments of the original Klein. He slowed down his tempo and said, "The Creator awoke from Chaos and shattered the darkness, creating the first ray of light. He then fused himself completely into the universe and made up all of existence. His body became the land and stars. One of his eyes became the sun, while the other became the crimson moon. Some of his blood rushed into the seas and rivers, nourishing and nurturing lives…"

Klein subconsciously paused when he said that. Partially, it was because the relevant memories were a blur and that the creation myth was very similar to the Chinese creation myth of Pangu.

The imaginations of people from different worlds shared something in common on their myths and legends!

Noticing that Klein was having 'trouble,' Dunn smiled and added, "His lungs turned into the elves; His heart turned into the giants; His liver turned

into the treants; His brain turned into the dragons; His kidneys turned into the feather serpents; His hair turned into the phoenixes; His ears turned into the demonic wolves; His mouth and teeth turned into the mutants, and His remaining bodily fluids turned into the sea monsters, of which the essence was Naga. His stomach, His small and large intestines, and the evil parts of His body turned into devils, evil spirits and various kinds of unknown maleficent existences. His spirit became the Eternal Blazing Sun, the Lord of the Storms, and the God of Knowledge and Wisdom…”

"His wisdom gave birth to humanity. That was the first Epoch, the Chaos Epoch." Klein finished the last sentence for Dunn, but he found it funny and ridiculous.

As a keyboard folklorist, it was the first time he came into contact with a creation myth that was 'arranged' in such great detail. It was so detailed that almost every prominent race corresponded to a particular body part of the Creator.

It's like a children's song with children sitting in a row and eating fruit…

Furthermore, it was not only mentioned in the canon of the Evernight Goddess. The Churches of the Lord of Storms and God of Steam and Machinery also had similar descriptions. None of them alleviated themselves or devalued the other gods…

This either means that the creation myth is real or hints that the few Churches had undergone a long period of strife before compromising before the Fifth Epoch…

With this in mind, Klein suddenly had another question. He asked with a frown, "It feels problematic. Why are the Eternal Blazing Sun, Lord of Storms, and God of Knowledge and Wisdom born directly from the Creator's spirit, while the Goddess isn't?"

In the Revelation of Evernight's prehistorical records, the Evernight Goddess had only awoken at the end of the Second Epoch. Together with

the Lord of Storms, Eternal Blazing Sun, and other gods, she blessed and help humanity survive the Cataclysm. It was also known as the Third Epoch, the Cataclysm Epoch.

It was during that time that Mother Earth and the God of Combat appeared as well. As for the God of Steam and Machinery, whose original name was the God of Craftsmanship, He was born only in the Fourth Epoch.

In that sense, the standing among the gods seemed self-evident.

The ones who were more ancient was more orthodox. It was extremely clear!

This also troubled the believers of the Evernight Goddess.

Dunn Smith held his pipe with another hand and instead of answering, he returned with a question, "Repeat the Goddess's full title."

Klein immediately felt like he had stabbed himself with a knife. He racked his brains and tried his best to recall.

"The Evernight Goddess is nobler than the stars and more eternal than eternity. She is also the Lady of Crimson, the Mother of the Secrets, the Empress of Disaster and Horror, Mistress of Calm and Silence."

Thankfully, Klein's mother was a devout believer of the Evernight Goddess. When she was still alive, she would recite this every evening at dinner. Even though the memories of the original Klein had fragmented, not all was lost.

"What does the Lady of Crimson symbolize?" Dunn asked with a guiding tone.

"The red moon." The moment Klein answered, he immediately understood.

"Then which part of the Creator did the red moon come from?" asked Dunn with a smile.

"A single eye!" Klein and Dunn smiled at each other.

This was no way less impressive than the Lord of Storms who was formed from a third of the Creator's spirit!

As for the Churches of Mother Earth and the God of Combat, they likely had similar explanations. However, the God of Steam and Machinery had been born too late to find a reason; thus, their church had been weak in the past thousand plus years. It was only with the invention of the steam engine that they seized the opportunity to truly be on par with the other gods.

Dunn stroked his pipe gently.

"Humanity was born out of the wisdom of the Creator, so we have clever and extraordinary brains, but lack other magical powers. However, from the creation myth, we can form a simple but clear conclusion. Everything stems from the same origin."

"Stems from the same origin…" Klein repeated the last few words.

"According to this conclusion, humans who are protected by the gods were able to resist the giants, devils, and the mutants. Gradually, they figured out means to obtain the power of the Beyonders. That is by using the corresponding parts of the evil spirits, dragons, monsters, magical trees, flowers, or crystals and combining them with other materials to form potions. By consuming and absorbing the potion, one will gain different powers. This is common knowledge among mysticism studies."

Dunn did not elaborate in detail and only gave a brief introduction. "In this process, our ancestors relied on painful lessons to discover that if they were to consume high-grade or extraordinary potions, it would easily lead to tragic consequences. There are three possible outcomes."

"Which three?" pressed Klein curiously.

"First, mental death and the complete breakdown of a body. Every piece of flesh would become a terrifying monster. Second, their personality will be changed by the powers contained in the potion. They will turn cold, sensitive, irascible, cruel, and indifferent. Third, well…" Dunn put down his pipe and picked up a porcelain cup and took a sip. "Fermo coffee from the Paz River Valley is bitter, but very fragrant. It leaves a splendid aftertaste. Do you want one?"

"I prefer coffee from the Feynapotter plateau. Of course, I have only drank it a few times at Welch's place." Klein politely declined. "What's the third outcome?"

"Mental disorder. Turning crazy on the spot, becoming more devilish than the devil. This is what it means by losing control." Dunn emphasized the words 'losing control.'

Without waiting for Klein to say a word, he put down his coffee cup and continued, "After a long period of experimentation and exploration, together with the birth of the Blasphemy Slate, humans have finally perfected the potion system. We formed a tiered system that chains into stable progression paths known as Sequences. The lower the number in a Sequence, the higher the grade of a potion. At this point, the seven major churches each control at least one complete Sequence. Besides, there are also incomplete 'paths' that they have gathered over the past hundreds or thousand years."

"Blasphemy Slate?" Klein sharply noticed the term.

At the Gathering, The Hanged Man had also mentioned it!

According to The Hanged Man, the Blasphemy Slate was the most critical factor of a potion's system formation and completion!

That seemed to contradict what Dunn had just said.

"Those were things created by some evil gods. As for which era it appeared, what it contains or what's so special about it, I am unsure as well. If you discover any clues, you have to immediately report it to me. It deserves the highest level of response," said Dunn vaguely. "I mentioned one of the types of losing control. I'll now tell you the remaining four."

"Alright." Klein pushed the question of the Blasphemy Slate to the back of his mind and listened attentively.

"Although humans have clever minds, they lack extraordinary powers, it is not absolute. There are always a few lucky ones; perhaps I should call them the unlucky ones. They are born with relatively higher perception. Well, it also means the ability to sense spirits. They can hear voices that others cannot hear and see things that others cannot see. They have partial characteristics of Beyonders."

While Dunn spoke, he looked at the empty air around him and watched Klein shudder in fear. "In other words, if they are half a Sequence 9 Beyonder and have fixed characteristics. Oh, Sequence 9 is the lowest grade in the 'chain… ' In short, they can only choose a corresponding, fixed Sequence pathway. If they consume other potions, the effects might range from mental disorders to a loss of control, or even worse, death."

"Got it." Klein nodded slowly.

"The third kind is similar to the second kind. Once you choose a Sequence chain, you will be forced to go down that path. There will be no room for regret. If you were to consume potions from the corresponding Sequence of other 'paths,' there will be a high probability you will get mixed, unusual and warped powers. But it is almost certain that you would be in a semi-deranged state; sensitive and irascible, cruel and bloodthirsty, and silent and melancholic.

"And there is only one such opportunity. After that, regardless if you consume the potions from the original path or potions in the present Sequence, the only result is a loss of control. The outcome could then be

mental death; alternatively, the body breaks down into monsters or even transforms into an evil spirit." As Dunn spoke, he lifted his coffee cup to take a sip.

Klein, who turned alarmed and fearful after hearing this, fell silent for a few seconds before asking, "What about the fourth kind?"

"The fourth kind, heh heh. That is the most common problem. When we consume potions to gain powers that originally belong to extraordinary beings, we undergo an unnatural transformation. Therefore, we would more or less be affected by the remnant spiritual powers. While perhaps the symptoms might not manifest and are undetectable to others, it will definitely lurk in one's mind. If one rushes to consume the corresponding potion ranked higher in the Sequence before fully grasping the extraordinary powers the potion brings and eliminating the subtle traces, the madness will accumulate, increasing the chances of losing control…" Dunn suddenly fell silent.

After a short pause, he said with a sigh, "As per the internal rules of us Nighthawks, even if a teammate were to make a great contribution, they must have consumed the last potion three years ago and be examined before they can be promoted. Even so, there are still many who lose control every year."

How terrifying… Klein drew a gasp as he asked, "Then what about the final kind?"

There was no trace of a smile despite Dunn's curved lips.

"The fifth kind is the most common reason for a loss of control. For Beyonders, one's spiritual perception would be enhanced more or less. The smaller the number in the Sequence, the more enhanced their perception. Therefore, they would hear what others cannot hear, see what others cannot see, and encounter things others would not encounter. They are constantly met with mysterious enticement and illusionary bewitchment. Once they are

overstimulated or have greedy desires, they will slowly go down the path of losing control."

As he spoke, Dunn looked straight at Klein, his gray pupils reflecting Klein's figure.

His tone turned bleak as he said, "The founder of the Nighthawks, Archbishop Chanis, once said, 'We are guardians, but also a bunch of miserable wretches that are constantly fighting against threats and madness.'"

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CHAPTER 19
SEALED ARTIFACTS

"We are guardians, but also a bunch of miserable wretches that are constantly fighting against dangers and madness."

The corridor outside the window was sealed, its walls ice-cold. The room was illuminated with bright yellow lights. Dunn Smith's delivery echoed, sending blow after blow to Klein's heart. It left him temporarily at a loss for words.

Dunn shook his head and smiled when he saw Klein silent.

"Are you very disappointed? Beyonders are not like what you imagine them to be. We are always treading alongside danger."

"There is always a price to any gain." Klein recovered from his shock as he answered with a quivering voice.

It was true that he never imagined that the halo, extraordinariness, and the inordinary aspects of a Beyonder would have such hidden threats. Perhaps it was only because he was hearing a description without witnessing it first hand and that he had been sucked into the vortex with a peculiar incident already befalling him. Klein soon brought his fear, uneasiness, worry, and apprehension under control.

Of course, the thought of shrinking back was inevitable; it lingered around and refused to leave.

"Not bad. Very mature and rational…" Dunn finished the last mouthful of coffee and added, "Also, Beyonders are not as powerful as you imagine

them to be, especially a low-Sequence Beyonder. Heh, why would we use 1 to represent the highest grade and 9 the lowest? Isn't this against intuition and logic? The low Sequence we often mention refers to a low grade or a high number. They are the starting point of the Sequence chain.

"Alright, where was I? Yes, Beyonders are not as powerful as you imagine. A low-Sequence Beyonder's power is no match for guns, much less cannons. They are just more fascinating and indefensible than firearms. If you have a chance to become a Beyonder in the future, you must consider what I said today carefully. Do not make a rash decision."

Klein gave a self-deprecating smile.

"I don't even know when I will have the chance."

He felt that he would not miss the opportunity if it presented itself to him. Consuming the wrong potion or a higher-ranked potion in the Sequence could be mostly avoid. The major potential danger was the subtle influences the potions had and what he experienced from having heightened auditory and visual perceptions.

For the former, he could draw on the experiences from generations of people before him. As long as he was not in a rush to advance himself and patiently grasped control over his powers, the chances of losing control were relatively low. Furthermore, he still had to resolve the potential problem that he currently faced. He had to understand the essence of mysticism and seek a way to transmigrate back. These were the underlying reasons for taking the first step. He did not aim for higher Sequence spots. If it was easy to lose control, he could just forget about advancement, stay in his original Sequence, and rely on knowledge to plan a way 'home.'

It was needless to elaborate on the potential risks. Back when Klein held the luck enhancement ritual, he was nearly driven crazy. The murmurings that nearly blew up his head were still fresh in his mind. They were not unavoidable by not becoming a Beyonder; therefore, it was better to gain power that allowed him to defend himself.

With this in mind, Klein felt that the pros clearly outweighed the cons. It made his thoughts of withdrawal almost disappear.

Dunn picked up his pipe again as his gray eyes carried a smiling trace to them.

"I cannot give you an accurate answer on this. To become a Beyonder, firstly, you must make enough contributions. Perhaps tomorrow or the day after, you would be able to interpret critical ancient documents. Maybe you would be able to give us valuable ideas for one of our cases? Secondly, it depends on the arrangements of the higher-ups. No one can be sure.

"Alright, I believe you should know quite a bit about Beyonders now. In the future, do not make a rash decision. Now, I'll introduce you to our Nighthawk team's civilian jobs."

He stood up and walked to the door. He pointed in the opposite direction of Chanis Gate and said, "We have an accountant and someone else who is in charge of procuring necessities and collecting supplies handed out by the Church and the police department while standing in as a carriage driver. They are professionals and do not need to take shifts, so they can rest on weekends. The other three civilian staff are Rozanne, Bredt, and Old Neil. Their jobs include: attending to visitors, cleaning the rooms, and writing case files and inventory registration lists. They also guard the armory, storeroom, and the archives, strictly enforcing the registration should someone wish to enter, take out or return an item. Each of them has one day off a week, other than Sundays. They negotiate among themselves on the arrangement of night shifts and rest days."

"So is my job scope the same as Rozanne and the rest?" Klein swept away his thoughts about Beyonders and tried to clarify his job responsibilities.

"No, there's no need. You are a professional," said Dunn with a smile. "You currently have two tasks. First, every morning or afternoon, go take a stroll outside. Focus on the various streets that lead from Welch's place to yours."

"What?" Klein was dumbfounded.

What kind of job is this?

Is that very professional?

Dunn inserted his hands into the pockets of his black windbreaker and said, "After you confirm that you have lost your memories, we will close the case on Welch and Naya. Similarly, that diary of the Antigonus family has vanished completely. We suspect that you brought it with you. You might have hidden it on your way home which might be why we did not find any clues at your place. This is also likely the reason why you were not there and chose to commit suicide at home.

"Although you were mysteriously influenced and have forgotten this piece of memory, the human spirit and brain is very fascinating, so there might be residual traces. Daly might not be able to obtain them through her means as a medium, but it does not mean that they do not exist. Perhaps you will feel a sense of déjà vu at a familiar and critical spot.

"That is what we wish to obtain."

"Got it." Klein was enlightened.

The Nighthawks' deduction of the diary's location was indeed reasonable.

He was the only one alive among the people involved. Only he had the time and motive to take the diary away and hide it on his way back!

"If you can find the diary this way, you will likely made enough of a contribution to become a Beyonder," encouraged Dunn, indirectly revealing the importance of the diary.

"I hope." Klein nodded.

Dunn changed the subject again.

"Secondly, you get a day off every week. You can decide which day it is for now. When you are not outside, go to our armory and read the literature and canon books. This is a job for a professional historian. When you finish them all, you will have to begin taking shifts with Old Neil and the rest."

"Alright, no problem." Klein heaved a sigh of relief.

This is not something too difficult…

At this moment, Dunn turned his body halfway and pointed to the black outward-swinging gates that was engraved with seven sacred emblems.

"This is Chanis Gate. It is named after the creator of the modern Nighthawk system, Archbishop Chanis. There is one under the central cathedral of every major city.

"It is guarded by formal Nighthawk members on rotation. Inside, there are at least two 'Keepers' who are sent by the Church, as well as countless traps. You must not approach it under any circumstance; otherwise, misfortune will befall you."

"That sounds scary," Klein expressed his feelings.

"The area inside is divided into a few zones. Stored within are certain potion formulas for certain Sequences and other magical materials. It is also used to temporarily hold heretics, mutants, cultists, and members of secret organizations. Heh heh, they will eventually be sent to the Holy Cathedral," introduced Dunn in passing.

Holy Cathedral? The headquarters of the Church of the Evernight Goddess located in the Winter County to the north of the kingdom, Cathedral of Serenity? Klein nodded slightly as though he was pondering over the matter.

"In addition, there are all sorts of classified documents and records inside. When you gain a higher clearance, you might have a chance of reading

them." Dunn hesitated for a moment before adding, "Behind the Chanis Gate, there are also Sealed Artifacts in the basement."

"Sealed Artifacts?" Klein ruminated on the terms.

It sounded like a specialized term.

"Some of the extraordinary items we gather and retrieve are just too important and magical. If they fall into the wrong hands, it would cause immense destruction. Therefore, we have to keep it strictly confidential and watch them carefully. Even we can only use it under special circumstances. Besides…" With that said, Dunn paused for a moment before continuing, "Besides, there are some things inside that are very special. They had certain 'living' characteristics which can entice the Keepers. It would influence the surroundings, attempt escape, and cause catastrophic outcomes. They have to be strictly controlled."

"How fascinating," commented Klein wistfully.

"The Nighthawk headquarters have categorized these Sealed Artifacts into four grades. Grade 0 represents Extremely Dangerous. They are of the highest importance and of the highest confidentiality. They are not to be inquired, disseminated, described, or spied. They can only be sealed in the basement of the Holy Cathedral," described Dunn in detail. "Grade 1 is Highly Dangerous. They can be used in limited ways. Their security clearance is limited to diocesan bishops or Nighthawk deacons and above. The central cathedral of diocese headquarters like Backlund can store one to two artifacts. The rest will be handed over to the Holy Cathedral.

"Grade 2 is Dangerous. They can be used with care and moderation. The security clearance requires one to be a bishop or a Nighthawk team's captain and above. The central cathedrals in the various cities can store three to five artifacts. The rest will be turned into the Holy Cathedral or the diocese headquarters. Grade 3 is Considerably Dangerous. They have to be used carefully. It can only be requested for operations that require three or

more people… The security clearance requires one to be a formal member of the Nighthawks."

"In the future, you will see the corresponding documents. Through the numbers, you can understand what they represent. For instance, 2-125 means that it is a Dangerous grade Sealed Artifact No. 125."

As Dunn went on, he suddenly turned around and returned to his room. He pulled out a piece of paper from the bottom of the drawer.

"By the way, take a look at this. Three years ago, a newly appointed archbishop lost control. For some unknown reason, he stormed through the various levels of protection and vanished mysteriously with a Grade 0 Sealed Artifact. Memorize this photo. If you discover him, do not alert or disturb him. Return to report it immediately or the chance of you dying in the line of duty is a thousand percent."

"What?" Klein received the piece of paper. There was no title on it, just a black and white photo with a few lines of words.

"Ince Zangwill. Male. Forty years old. Former archbishop. A Gatekeeper who failed in his promotion and was enticed by the devil and was corrupted. He escaped with Sealed Artifact 0-08. Particular traits are…"

The picture depicted Ince Zangwill as wearing an all-black clergyman robe with buttons on both sides and a soft cap. His hair was dark blonde and his pupils were so blue that it was nearly black. He had a high nose and his lips were tightly pursed. His facial features were like a classic sculpture without any wrinkles. The most striking characteristic was that he was blind in one eye.

"The description of the corrupted is so detailed but the only thing about the Sealed Artifact is its codename…" Klein honestly offered his first impression.

"That's why it is at the highest security clearance. The search for Sealed Artifacts No. 0-08 is only described verbally and never written in words. Even so, the description will be little," said Dunn with a sigh. "0-08 appears to be a common quill, but it does not need ink to write. That's all."

Dunn did not dive deeper into the topic. He tugged at the golden chain on his black windbreaker and took out a gorgeous pocket watch of the same color. He clicked it open and took a glance before pointing outside.

"I've told you all you need to know. Go to the armory to find Old Neil. Get him to arrange the documents that you need to read. He is no ordinary civilian clerk. He was once a formal member, but due to his advanced age, he failed to be promoted. His health is ailing, so it's no longer suitable for him to handle cases. Furthermore, he does not wish to become an internal Keeper or rest at home. All he wishes is to be accompanied by documents and records."

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CHAPTER 20
THE FORGETFUL DUNN

"Okay." Klein bowed slightly as he wore his short top hat again. However, his mind was preoccupied with how Sealed Artifact 0-08 looked.

It appears to be just your everyday quill?

It writes without ink?

Then, what is its actual use? What makes it classified at the highest level of confidentiality that it's deemed Extremely Dangerous?

Can it be a pen that kills anyone whose name is written?

No, that would be way too heaven-defying. Ince Zangwill wouldn't need to escape and hide away if that were the case…

Just as Klein turned around to leave, Dunn suddenly shouted out to him.

"Hold on. I forgot something."

"What?" Klein turned his head; his eyes puzzled.

Dunn put back his pocket watch and said with a smile, "Later, remember to visit the accountant, Mrs. Orianna, and get an advance payment of four weeks—a total of twelve pounds. After that, you'll earn half your salary every week until the difference is covered."

"That's too much. There's no need for this, the amount should be reduced," said Klein subconsciously.

He had no objection towards an advanced payment. After all, he didn't even have the money needed to pay for the public horse carriage trip home. However, to receive twelve pounds at once left him a little afraid.

"No, it's necessary," said Dun as he shook his head and smiled. "Think about it. Do you still wish to continue living in your present apartment? One that needs you to share a bathroom with so many other tenants? Even if you aren't taking yourself into consideration, think about the lady. Besides…"

He paused when he saw Klein nod in agreement. He smiled and sized up Klein's garbs and said with a meaningful intent, "Besides, you need a cane, and you should buy a new suit."

Klein was taken aback for a second before snapping back to reality. His face immediately burned with embarrassment since the suit he was wearing was cheap and of inferior quality.

Typically, a top hat was made of silk, costing five to six soli. A bow tie was three soli, a walking cane inlaid with silver was seven to eight soli, a shirt was three soli, while pants, a vest, and tuxedo were around seven pounds in total. Leather boots were nine to ten soli. As such, an entire suit cost more than eight pounds and seven soli. Of course, to be a presentable gentleman, one needed a watch chain, a pocket watch, and a wallet.

Back then, the original Klein and Benson scrimped and saved before managing to save up a pool of money. When they went to a clothing store to check the price, they ended up running off without even bothering to try haggling. They each bought a set at a bargain shop near Iron Cross Street for a total of less than two pounds.

It was also because of that incident that original Klein had a deep impression of the prices of clothes.

"O-Okay," Klein stammered a reply.

He was like the original Klein. He was someone who cared about his appearance.

Dunn took out the pocket watch again and clicked it open to take a glance at it.

"Perhaps you should find Mrs. Orianna first? I know you'll spend quite some time at Old Neil's while Mrs. Orianna will likely be returning home soon."

"Alright." Klein was acutely aware of his state of poverty and did not object to it.

Dunn returned to the table's side and pulled at a few hanging ropes as he said, "I'll get Rozanne to bring you there."

The ropes began their operation as the gears ground, producing a chime from a bell at the reception area of Blackthorn Security Company. When Rozanne heard it, she hurriedly stood up and carefully made her way down.

It did not take long before she appeared in front of Klein again.

Dunn said humorously, "I did not disturb your rest, right? Oh, bring Moretti to Mrs. Orianna."

Rozanne secretly curled her lips as she answered 'happily—'

"Alright, Captain."

"Is that all?" At that moment, Klein blurted out in surprise.

To get his advance payment from finance, isn't there a need to get an approval letter from the Captain? Shouldn't you write something?

"So?" Dunn returned with a question.

"I mean— Don't I need your signature to claim an advance payment from Mrs. Orianna?" Klein tried his best to use simple language.

"Oh, no. There's no need. Rozanne is enough proof." Dunn pointed at the brown-haired girl and gave a reply.

Captain, it seems there's almost zero management of our finances… Klein resisted his urge to deliver a sarcastic comment before turning to leave the room with Rozanne.

At that moment, he heard Dunn shout out again.

"Hold on. There's still another thing."

Can we finish it all at once? Klein turned back with a smiling face.

"Yes?"

Dunn pressed at his temple and said, "When you meet Old Neil, remember to collect ten demon hunting bullets."

"Me? Demon hunting bullets?" Klein returned in astonishment.

"Welch's revolver is still with you, right? There's no need for you to turn it in." Dunn inserted a single hand into his pocket and said, "With the demon hunting bullets, if you were to face with an paranormal danger, you will be able to protect yourself. Uh, it will give you some courage at the very least."

There's no need for you to add on the final sentence… Just as Klein was vexing over the problem, he answered without any hesitation, "Alright. I'll remember to do so!"

"This will require me to write a formal document. Wait a moment." Dunn sat down and picked up the dark red fountain pen. He scribbled a 'note,' signed it, and stamped it.

"Thank you, Captain." Klein received it sincerely.

He slowly walked back before turning around.

"Hold on."

Dunn shouted one more time.

…Captain, you look to be in your thirties. Why do you have the symptoms of dementia? Klein squeezed out a smile and turned around to ask, "Anything else?"

"I forgot earlier that you are not trained in shooting, so getting demon hunting bullets would be useless. Let's do this; collect thirty normal bullets every day. Take the opportunity when you are out to go to the street corner —the underground shooting range at No. 3 Zouteland Street. Most of it belongs to the police department, but there is one that is specially for us Nighthawks. Oh, right, you also need to get a badge from Old Neil. Otherwise, you won't be able to enter the shooting range." Dunn smacked his forehead and took back the note from Klein. He then added the information and stamped it with another seal.

"A good marksman is produced by expending bullets. Do not think lightly of it." Dunn handed back Klein the modified note.

"Got it." Klein, who was fearful of danger, yearned to visit the shooting range that very day.

He took two steps towards the exit before carefully turning around halfways. He deliberated before asking, "Captain, is there anything else?"

"No." Dunn nodded firmly.

Klein heaved a sigh of relief and walked straight out the door. While walking, he had the strong urge to turn around to ask another, "Are you sure there's nothing else?"

He resisted that urge and finally left the Keeper room successfully.

"Captain has always been this way. He often forgets things." As Rozanne walked by his side, she softly disparaged the captain, "Even my granny has a better memory than him. Of course, he only forgets the trivial stuff. Yea, trivial stuff. Klein, I'll call you Klein in the future. Mrs. Orianna is a very affable person. It is easy to hit it off with her. Her father is a watchsmith with excellent skill…"

As Klein listened to the brown-haired girl rattle on, he stepped into the stairwell and returned to the upper floor. He found Mrs. Orianna in the far office on the right-hand side.

She was a black-haired woman dressed in a flounce lace dress. She appeared in her thirties and had fashionable curly hair. Her pair of green eyes were clear and smiling, and she seemed refined and elegant.

After Orianna heard Rozanne repeat Dunn Smith's instructions, she took out a note and wrote an advance slip.

"Sign here. Do you have a seal? If not, you can leave a thumbprint."

"Alright." Now familiar with the procedures, Klein completed the formalities.

Orianna took out a copper key and opened the safe in the room. As she counted the pounds, she said with a smile, "You are lucky. We have enough cash today. By the way, Klein, were you invited by Captain because you were involved in a paranormal activity and the fact that you have a specialty?"

"Yes, you have an impeccable intuition." Klein was not stingy with his compliments.

Orianna took out four notes with light-gray backgrounds with deep black patterns printed on them. After locking the safe, she turned around and

smiled.

"That's because I had a similar experience too."

"Really?" Klein showed an appropriate level of surprise.

"Do you know about the serial killer that sent Tingen City into a frenzy sixteen years ago?" Orianna handed over the four gold pounds to Klein.

“…Yes! It's the one which had five girls killed consecutively. Some had their hearts and stomachs removed by that Bloody Butcher? My mother often used that matter to scare my sister when we were young," said Klein as he thought about it.

He received the notes and discovered that two of them were in five pound denominations and two of them were in one pound denominations. All of them had a gray background and were inked in black. The four corners had complicated patterns and special ink to prevent counterfeiting.

The former notes were slightly bigger and in the middle of them was Loen Kingdom's fifth king, George III's direct ancestor, Henry Augustus I. He wore a white hair band above his rotund face. His eyes were slender and he had an abnormally serious expression. However, Klein felt an indescribably sense of closeness to him.

This was a five-pound note!

It's almost equal to four weeks of Benson's salary!

In the middle of the one-pound note was George III's father, the former king, William Augustus VI. This mighty figure had a thick mustache and a firm gaze. While he was in power, he freed the Loen Kingdom from the shackles of the old order, allowing his nation to regain the pinnacle spot.

They were all 'good kings… ' Klein could faintly smell the notes' ink that elated and refreshed him.

"Yes, if the Nighthawks had not come in time, I would have been the sixth victim." Mrs. Orianna's tone still hinted at a sense of lingering fear despite the incident having happened more than ten years ago.

"I heard that the serial killer, no— The Butcher was a Beyonder?" Klein carefully folded the paper notes and placed it in an inner pocket of his suit. Then, he patted the area a few times to confirm it was there.

"Yes." Mrs. Orianna gave a firm nod. "He had killed even more before that. The reason why he was captured was because he was preparing a ritual for the devil."

"No wonder he wanted different organs… Sorry, Mrs. Orianna for making you recall such unpleasant memories," said Klein sincerely.

Orianna smiled. "I'm no longer afraid… I was studying accountancy in business school back then. After that incident, I've been here ever since. Alright, I'll stop keeping you from what you should do. You still need to head to Old Neil's."

"Goodbye, Mrs. Orianna." Klein took off his hat and bowed before leaving the office. Before he went downstairs, he could not help but pat his inner pocket to make sure the twelve pounds was still there.

He did a turn at a cross-junction and headed right. It did not take him long to see a half-closed iron door.

Knock! Knock! Knock!

While he knocked, an aged voice sounded from inside.

"Come in."

Klein pushed open the metal door and discovered a cramped room which only allowed for a desk and two chairs.

There was a tightly locked iron door inside the room and behind the desk was a hoary elder dressed in a class black robe. He was reading a few yellowed pages from a book with the illumination of a gas lamp.

He raised his head and looked at the door.

"Are you Klein Moretti? Rozanne said you were very polite when she came over a while ago."

"Miss Rozanne is really a friendly person. Good afternoon, Mr. Neil." Klein took off his hat as a gesture of respect.

"Have a seat." Neil pointed to the silver tin can with complex flowery patterns on the table. "Would you like a cup of handground coffee?"

The wrinkles at the edge of his eyes and mouth were deeply recessed. His dark red pupils appeared slightly turbid.

"It doesn't seem like you drink coffee?" Klein acutely noticed that Neil's porcelain cup was filled with clear water.

"Haha, it's a habit of mine. I do not drink coffee after three in the afternoon," Neil explained with a laugh.

"Why?" Klein asked in passing.

Neil held back his smile as he looked into Klein's eyes and said, "I'm afraid that it would affect my sleep at night. It will make me hear the murmurings of the unknown existence."

Klein was momentarily unable to answer him as he changed the subject.

"Mr. Neil, what documents and books should I read?"

As he spoke, he took out the note written by Dunn.

"Anything that has to do with history, or are complicated and incomplete. To be honest, I have always been trying to learn, but all I can achieve is a rudimentary grasp. It's just too troublesome for the other material, such as people's diaries, contemporary books, epitaphs, etc…" lamented Neil. "For example, the things I have here require more detailed historical records to determine the exact content."

"Why?" Klein turned confused.

Neil pointed to a few yellowed pages in front of him.

"These are from Roselle Gustav's lost diary before his death. In order to keep things secret, he used strange symbols he invented to take records."

Emperor Roselle? The transmigration senior? Klein was taken aback as he immediately listened attentively.

"Many people believe that he did not truly die, but instead became a hidden god. Therefore, cults which revere him have always been holding various rituals to attempt at gaining power. We will occasionally encounter such incidents and obtain a few original or duplicated copies of the diary," Neil said with a shake of his head. "Till date, no one has been able to decipher the special symbols' true meaning. Therefore, the Holy Cathedral has permitted us to keep copies for research, hoping that it would bring them a pleasant surprise."

With that said, Neil revealed a smug smile.

"I have already deciphered a few symbols and have confirmed that they represent numbers. Look at what I discovered. It's actually a diary! Yes, I wish to use history from different periods, especially events that revolved around the emperor. By comparing those records to the ones written in the diary for the corresponding day, I can try to interpret more of the symbols.

"That's the mind of a genius, right?" The old gentleman with white hair and deep wrinkles looked at Klein with bright eyes.

Klein nodded in agreement.

"Yes."

"Haha, you can also take a look at it. Tomorrow, you will have to help me with this diary." Neil pushed the few yellowed pages towards Klein.

Klein turned them around and took a glance at them, but it immediately stunned him!

Although the 'symbols' had been copied in terribly ugly fashion, to the point of looking a little distorted, there was no way he could be mistaken…

This was because they were words he was most familiar with.

Chinese!

*And it's f**king Simplified Chinese!*

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CHAPTER 21
AN OLD FRIEND IN A DIFFERENT WORLD

In that instant, Klein even believed that he had transmigrated back. However, the elegant gas lamp surrounded by brass grids and the silver-inlaid tin, which Old Neil kept his handground coffee in, made him recognize the reality he was in.

The transmigrator, Emperor Roselle, is really a fellow countryman of mine? He was using Simplified Chinese—which doesn't exist in this world—to record secrets? With the indescribable feeling of identifying an old friend in a different world, Klein quickly read through the three pages.

"18th November. Truly a fascinating matter. A blue-sky experimentation and a chance mistake made me discover the pathetic fellow lost and trapped in the deep darkness amid the storms. He can only approach the reality of this world on the day of the full moon every month; yet, he is unable to transmit his cries. He is lucky to have met me, the protagonist of this era."

"After reading the paragraph I wrote above, I suddenly felt a little down. Even my Chinese is written like a translation. Four decades have passed in a finger snap. My past memories feel more like a dream."

"1184, 1st January. At the grand New Year Gala, Lady Florena was truly splendid."

"2nd January. My diplomats are all idiots!"

"3rd January. I made a hasty choice back then. In hindsight, I should have chosen the Apprentice, the Seer, or the Marauder. Unfortunately, there is no way of redoing it."

"4th January. Why are my children so stupid? I've repeated myself so many times. Do not be fooled by those charlatans! The key thing about potions is not about grasping them, but digesting them! It's nothing about tapping powers, but acting! And the name of a potion is not solely symbolic at its core, but a concrete imagery, and the 'key' to digestion!"

"9th September. An alliance opposing me has been established. Feysac from the north, Loen from the east, Feynapotter from the south. My enemies have finally joined forces, but I have no fear. I will use facts to teach them that the generations of weapons and knowledge cannot be compensated by mere numbers and low-grade Sequencers. Besides, it's not as though I do not have subordinates. As for the higher-grades, heh heh. Have they forgotten who I am?"

"23rd September. I have lost communications with the ship seeking the Forsaken Land of the Gods. I should consider inventing wireless telegraphs. I hope it would not be affected by the storm."

"24th September. Miss Ithaca is more mesmerizing than Lady Florena. Perhaps, I'm just being nostalgic about my youth."

Due to the complexity of characters in Simplified Chinese, the font was slightly larger than normal, leading to less content on each page. Furthermore, for preservational and research purposes, the back of each page was left empty. But even so, Klein still felt an upheaval of emotions when he read the diary. In particular, Emperor Roselle's description of the crux of potions made him feel like he found the path to the solution. He was thrilled at having learned a priceless secret.

Perhaps, this will be a beacon for my future path as a Beyonder! Well, the three pages belong to entries at different times. It seems Emperor Roselle only writes the year on the first entry of each year. It cannot be determined

which year the two pages with September and November belong to… Who is the pathetic fellow he discovered?

What do "digesting" and "acting" actually mean?

Where is the Forsaken Land of the Gods?…

These questions bubbled in Klein's head. It made him eager to immediately gather all of Emperor Roselle's diary and read it from cover to cover!

"Klein?" At that moment, Old Neil asked puzzledly across him.

Klein jolted awake as he hurriedly covered it up with a laugh. "I thought I would be the most special one. I was trying to decipher and interpret it."

"You are young indeed." Old Neil nodded, laughing. "I once believed that I was the most special one as well."

Klein flipped through the three pages in his hand and after confirming that he had not missed anything, he handed it over to Old Neil and thoughtlessly asked, "Do we only have these few pages?"

I want to see more of Emperor Roselle's diary! "Did you think there would be many?" Old Neil caressed the scripts as his wrinkles deepened from his scoff. "There are not many incidents a year that involve Beyonders and mystery to begin with. Sigh, the major reason is the gradual extinction of extraordinary species in our Northern Continent. Without them, there won't be a lot of potions, causing the number of Beyonders to reduce with time. Sigh, over the past few centuries, dragons, giants, and elves have become simply records in books. Even the seafolks are no longer seen near the coastal waters."

Upon hearing this, Klein suddenly thought of a meme. He immediately said with a smile, "I think it's time to establish a Dragons and Giants Protection Association."

Old Neil looked confused when he heard that. It took him quite some time to figure out what it meant. After figuring out its meaning, he rapped the table and laughed quite heartily in a not-so-gentlemanly manner.

"Haha, Klein, you really are humorous. This is a tradition of our Loen Kingdom. It's good that young people have a sense of humor. I believe we shouldn't be overly narrow in scope. Why are we only protecting dragons and giants? It should be called Fantastic Beasts Protection Association."

"No, no, no. How can we forget those poor plants?" Klein shook his head.

They exchanged looks and proclaimed in unison: "Fantastic Organisms Protection Association!"

Both of them laughed tacitly. The awkwardness and unfamiliarity of the atmosphere between them dissipated considerably.

"There are fewer interesting young people like you these days… Where was I?" Old Neil's wrinkles suffused a smile as he said, "I remember. There are not many incidents a year that involve Beyonders and mystery to begin with. The retards who revere Emperor Roselle are the minority of the minority. It's already pretty good that we can obtain three scripts… Well, the other larger cathedrals or dioceses might have some…”

After muttering a few words, he took the approval note which Klein had placed on the table earlier and took a look.

"Are they pistol bullets, rifle bullets, or steam-pressured bullets?"

"It's a revolver," answered Klein honestly.

"Alright. I'll go get them. Ahem, do you have an armpit holster? As a gentleman, we can't let you have something bulging below your waist in public." Old Neil made a joke that all men understood.

"Heh, no. Do I need to get Captain to include it?" Klein smiled cooperatively.

Old Neil stood up and said, "There's no need. I just need to make a record. It's an accessory item. Repeat after me: accessory item."

"Were you a teacher in the past?" joked Klein.

"I spent some time at the Church's Sunday school and free schools." Old Neil waved the note and took out a key from the drawer. He then opened the iron door that led into an inner chamber.

Beyonders do not seem much different from commoners… Klein murmured silently before casting his gaze on the table where the three pages of the diary were.

Emperor Roselle is indeed involved in the realm of mystery…

His diary is invaluable… To others, they are just pieces of scrap paper. It is unknown when they will be deciphered, but they are a valuable treasure to me! I wonder where the remaining parts of the diary are…

I have to think of ways to get more… Klein's mind went through upheavals as he could hardly calm down. This continued until Old Neil came out and closed the iron door.

"Ten demon hunting bullets, thirty revolver bullets. An ox-hide armpit holster, and a Seventh Unit, Special Operations Department badge. Please count them and give them a try. Remember to sign the log book." Old Neil placed the items down on the table.

The revolver bullets were arranged neatly in a paper box which was divided into three layers. The bullets shimmered with a yellow sheen just like the bullets back home, but they appeared narrower.

As for the demon hunting bullets, they were kept in a small iron box. The shape was identical to regular revolver bullets, but their surface was silver in color. Upon a more careful examination, there were complicated and dazzling patterns with tiny Sacred Emblems—a black background dotted with stars and a half crimson moon—engraved at the bottom.

The ox-hide holster felt solid and it came with a belt and buckle. Beside it was a badge half the size of a palm. It had a metallic background with "Awwa County Police Department and Seventh Unit, Special Operations Department" inscribed in silver text. They formed almost two sealed circles and surrounded the "two crossed swords and a crown" police emblem.

"Unfortunately, it's not a Nighthawks badge," Klein said half wistfully and half probingly.

Old Neil smiled and urged Klein to test the armpit holster.

After he took off his jacket, Klein took quite a bit of effort to buckle up the holster, which hung close to his left armpit.

"Not bad." He put on his jacket again.

Old Neil sized him up and nodded in satisfaction.

"It suits you well. My judgment is as accurate as usual."

After putting away the other items into his pockets and signing the log book, Klein had a short, casual conversation with Old Neil before leaving.

Halfway, he suddenly he slapped himself in the forehead.

"I forgot to learn more about the Sequences and potions. It's all the fault of Emperor Roselle's diary…”

At this point, he was still unaware of what the first Sequence of the complete pathway the Church of the Evernight Goddess possessed. All he

knew was that it started with Sequence 9.

Rozanne had apparently mentioned something… The Sleepless? Just as Klein was slowly walking towards the stairs, a person came down.

He wore tight trousers which made movement easy. His white shirt was not tucked in, and he had a clear romantic temperament of a poet. He was none other than the black-haired, green-eyed police inspector who had previously came to search Klein's place. They had met upstairs previously, but they had not exchanged words.

"Good afternoon," greeted the young poet-like Nighthawk with a smile.

"Good afternoon. I believe I do not need to introduce myself?" answered Klein humorously.

"There's no need. I have a deep impression of you." The young Nighthawk extended his right hand and said, "Leonard Mitchell. Sequence 8's Midnight Poet."

Sequence 8… He's really a poet… Klein smilingly shook his hand as he returned with a question, "You have a deep impression of me?"

Leonard Mitchell's green eyes were deep as he replied with a very faint smile. "You have a special disposition."

He feels and sounds so gay… The corners of Klein's mouth moved slightly as he barely said with a smile, "I don't think so myself."

"After encountering an accident like that, you remained alive despite not receiving our protection immediately. That makes you special enough." Leonard pointed ahead. "I have to replace Captain. See you tomorrow."

"See you tomorrow." Klein turned to make way for the Nighthawk.

As he walked to the ends of the stairwell, Leonard Mitchell suddenly turned around and stared at the stone-paved ground which was illuminated by the yellow sunset. He muttered into the air softly, "Did you manage to notice anything…”

…

"Indeed, there's nothing special about him…”

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CHAPTER 22
STARTING SEQUENCE

After he went up the stairs and returned to the reception hall, Klein was about to bid Rozanne farewell when he heard the brown-haired girl mention briskly, "Captain says that you can come on Monday. He wants you to settle your household affairs first."

“…Alright." Klein never expected the Nighthawks' management to be so humane and accommodating. It made him feel a little grateful.

He was planning on waking early the next morning and make use of the opportunity to "wander around" to visit Tingen University. He planned on informing the staff in charge of the interview that he was not participating in the follow-up interviews. After all, he had originally obtained the opportunity to make the interview because of his professor's recommendation letter. Regardless, it was basic courtesy to have formal closure. Even if it was not for himself, he had to respect his mentor's efforts.

And in a world without telephones, where telegrams were charged by the character, and the fact that it would be too late to send a letter, he felt that taking the public carriage to the university was the most economical and suitable solution.

Having received the Captain's special approval, Klein did not need to tire himself out. He could wake up late and still make his way there on time.

Klein was just about to take off his hat to bid Rozanne farewell when he suddenly thought of something. He looked around and suppressed his voice. "Rozanne, do you know what the starting point of the Church's complete Sequence is?"

He had forgotten to ask Old Neil.

Rozanne's eyes widened as she looked at Klein in astonishment. "You wish to become a Beyonder?"

Was I that obvious? Klein's body language betrayed him as he answered in embarrassment, "Having learned that extraordinary and mysterious powers exist in the world, it's inevitable that I have some yearnings for it."

"Oh my Goddess. Do you know how dangerous it is? Didn't Captain tell you? The enemies of Beyonders are not just cultists or dark warlocks, but themselves! People lose control nearly every year. Some even end up sacrificing themselves! Aren't you going to consider how your family will feel?" Rozanne's hand gestures amplified her tone as her reaction appeared overly agitated. "Klein, I think the better choice is to be a civilian staff. There's nearly no danger, and our salary increases every year. After a few years of work, you will have saved up much money, allowing you to rent a bungalow in the North Borough or in the suburbs. You can then marry a rich and charming lady and have a wonderful family, having adorable and naughty little angels…"

"Rozanne, stop! Hold up!" Klein hurriedly stopped her in exasperation when he realized that she was changing the subject. "I just want to… to, well, understand the basics for now."

"Alright…" Rozanne fell silent for a few seconds as she lowered her gaze, feeling somewhat sorry. "Due to what happened to my father, whenever I face similar problems, I tend to be… well, you know, a little agitated. However, to be honest, I'm filled with respect towards any man or woman who willingly wishes to be a Nighthawk."

"I understand, I understand," echoed Klein.

Rozanne blinked her light brown eyes and added, "My father once said that one should never think that they can resolve hidden risks or combat danger by simply becoming more powerful or a higher Sequencer. In fact, it's the

opposite. They will encounter more terrifying matters. When facing the unknown or a terrifying existence, death and insanity are the only two outcomes. Heh, he ended up sacrificing himself two weeks after saying that… Klein, don't look at me with pity. My life is great now, really great! It's only right to feel fear towards these matters!"

"I only want to know the basics…" Klein repeated his previous reply, not sure whether he should laugh or cry.

*Captain explained it more clearly than you. And even if I do not become a Beyonder, I have already encountered something extraordinary…"*Alright," said Rozanne ruminatively. "I've heard Captain's and Old Neil's conversation before. As extraordinary creatures are declining or going extinct, few high Sequencers exist in this era. It's already very impressive to become a Beyonder! Combining our Tingen City and the suburbs, there are hundreds of thousands of people or maybe even more. Yet, there are only about thirty plus Beyonders. Well, it's just my guess… I'm not counting the cultists and dark warlocks who hide in the dark…"

Without waiting for Klein's reply, she seemed to regain her vibrancy as she clenched her fist and brought it to her chest.

"And among these thirty plus Beyonders, most of them are at Sequence 9! Uh, it seems I have gone off topic…"

"It's okay. That was something I wanted to know as well." Klein wished that Rozanne could be like her usual self, revealing more information as she rambled on.

"Anyways, it's already very, very impressive to become a Beyonder!" Rozanne repeated herself. "The starting Sequence of our Church's complete Sequence is Sleepless: Sequence 9, Sleepless!"

Indeed… Klein nodded as he watched Rozanne finding hard to stop herself from describing in detail.

"You should be able to guess from the name. A Sleepless is someone who does not need to sleep at night. Three to four hours of rest in the day would be sufficient. Man, I'm so envious… No, not at all! Sleep is a gift bestowed upon us by the Goddess. It's the truest bliss!

"Where was I? Ah, right. A Sleepless can see through the darkness even without any lights. The deeper into the night, the more powerful they become. I mean more powerful in the aspects of their physical strength, their intuition, and their mental capabilities. However, although they can detect unknown dangers that lurk in the dark, they will still rely on demon hunting bullets and other items to handle monsters they are unable to deal with via normal means. My father was once a Sleepless."

Without waiting for Klein to press on, Rozanne continued, "After that, it's Sequence 8's Midnight Poet, and one level higher is Sequence 7's Nightmare."

Nightmare? Klein instantly recalled that Dunn Smith had guided his dreams. He asked as a confirmation, "Captain?"

"You know about it?" Rozanne's mouth nearly turned into an "O" shape.

"Captain once entered my dream…" Klein glanced around as he lowered his voice once more.

"Got it…" Rozanne was enlightened as she answered with a whisper.

She picked up a coffee cup beside her and took a sip before saying wistfully, "There are only two Sequence 7 Beyonders in our Tingen City's Church. It's likely that Captain is one of them. Even if he goes to a large diocese like Backlund, he is still an impressive figure. Some deacons might not even be stronger than he is!"

"So Captain is that impressive." Klein echoed with a smiled.

Frankly, Dunn Smith's appearance last night had left a deep impression on him. He had basically believed that Dunn was an extremely powerful Beyonder.

"Of course!" Rozanne proudly straightened her back.

In moments, the scatterbrained her said with a vexed expression, "As for what's above Sequence 7, I have no idea. Among all the Nighthawks, perhaps only Captain will know."

"Then what about other starting Sequences? The ones that aren't complete?" Klein was satisfied as he changed the subject.

It had to be said that Rozanne's description of Sleepless did match his imaginations and expectations of Beyonders. However, it was not the kind he wished to become. The perfect Sequence 9 was likely one that could study and grasp more knowledge of the mystery. By doing so, he could leverage on them to figure out the reason for his transmigration and lay the foundations of his future transmigration back.

Rozanne thought for a moment before saying with a sigh, "I'm not that interested in this aspect. I only know we have more than other churches. After all, the Goddess is the Mother of the Secrets… Well, there should be two or three. Some of our teammates are cold and distant, making me fear them. They also have a strange smell to them. Some members… Well, I mean you should talk to Old Neil. He knows a lot, as well as quite a number of interesting magical rituals. Let me think. He once mentioned his Sequence 9 title, which is also the name of the potion formula… Ah, yes, it's called Mystery Pryer."

Quite a number of interesting magical rituals? Mystery Pryer sounds very close to what I want… Klein was slightly delighted.

"In addition, I also know of the name of a Sequence 7, the kind that's incomplete!" Rozanne said with a flaunting tone. She had just thought of it while recollecting.

"What is it?" Klein was abnormally curious.

In a world where high Sequencers were scarce to the point of them possibly not existing, Sequence 7 was probably considered quite a potent force in the Church.

Rozanne revealed a sweet smile as she replied smugly, "Spirit Medium!"

"Mdm. Daly?" asked Klein subconsciously.

After his initial surprise, he realized that it was nothing unexpected. Only a Sequence 7 Beyonder could achieve such an impressive performance as a medium!

Rozanne's eyes widened once again as she said in disbelief, "H-how do you know of that too?"

"I've met Mdm. Daly." Klein did not hide the matter.

"Alright," said Rozanne with an envious tone. "If I can become a Spirit Medium, one just like Mdm. Daly, then I'll be willing to be a Beyonder. No, I'll consider it carefully for ten minutes…”

"Yes, Mdm. Daly fulfills all my imaginations as a Beyonder," echoed Klein in a slightly exaggerated manner.

Having fulfilled his goals, he chatted idly with Rozanne for a few minutes until he realized he was not getting any new information. He took of his hat and bowed before leaving.

As he walked down the stairs, Klein suddenly stopped after taking a few steps. He reached out to pat the notes in his inner pocket.

Immediately following that, he took out twelve gold pound notes and clenched then tightly in his left palm. Then, he reached his hand into his

pocket and refused to release or pull them out again. Without realizing it, a smile appeared on his face.

According to the customs of the Foodaholic Empire—China—a treat had to be given after earning money!

It's time to give Melissa a treat tonight!

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CHAPTER 23
SIDE ARM

As Klein walked down Zouteland and while taking in the warm, humid breeze, he suddenly realized something.

He only had three pence of change. If he returned to Iron Cross Street via public carriage, it would cost him four pence. If he were to hand over a one-gold pound note, it would be akin to using a hundred-dollar bill to buy a bottle of cheap mineral water back on Earth. There was nothing wrong with that, but it was just quite awkward to do so.

Should I use three pence to travel three kilometers and walk the rest of the journey? Klein reached into his pocket with one hand as he slowed down his pace, considering other solutions.

That won't do! Soon, he rejected the idea.

It would take him a while to walk the remaining journey. Considering how he was carrying twelve pounds—a massive fortune—it was not safe!

Furthermore, he had deliberately not brought the revolver with him, afraid that the Nighthawks would confiscate it. If he were to encounter the danger that instigated Welch's death, there was no way he could fight back!

Get some change from a nearby bank? No, no way! There's a 0.5% processing fee. That's way too extravagant! Klein shook his head silently. Just the thought of the fees involved pained his heart!

Having ruled out one solution after another, Klein's eyes suddenly lit up when he saw a clothing shop in front of him!

That's right! Wouldn't the normal course of action be to buy something appropriately priced to get some change? A formal suit, shirt, vest, trousers, leather boots, and a cane were all within budget. They had to be bought sooner or later!

Oh, it's very troublesome when fitting clothes. Besides, Benson knows more about this than me and he's better at bargaining. I should consider it only after he's back… Then should I buy a cane? That's right! As the saying goes, a cane is a gentleman's best choice of defense. It is half as good as a crowbar. A gun in one hand and a cane in the other is the combat style of a civilized person! After debating internally, Klein made up his mind. He turned around and entered the clothing shop, Wilker Clothing and Hats.

The clothing store's layout resembled the clothing stores on Earth. The left wall was filled with rows of formal attires. The middle rows were decked with things like shirts, trousers, vests, and bowties. On the right were leather shoes and boots placed inside glass cabinets.

"Sir, may I help you?" A male salesperson dressed in a white shirt and red vest came over and asked politely.

In Loen Kingdom, rich and powerful gentlemen of high standing enjoyed wearing black suits comprising of white shirts matched with black vests and trousers. Their colors were relatively monotonous, so they required their male servants, salespeople, and service attendants to dress more brightly and colorfully, in order to distinguish themselves from their masters.

In contrast, ladies and mistresses wore dresses of all kinds in glamorous fashions. As such, maidservants would wear black and white.

Klein thought for a moment before answering the male salesperson's question. "A cane. Something that's heavier and harder."

The kind that can crack the skulls of others! The red-vested salesperson sized up Klein furtively before leading him into the store. He then pointed at a row of canes in the corner. "That cane inlaid with gold is made of

Ironheart wood. It's both very heavy and hard, and costs eleven soli seven pence. Do you want to give it a try?"

Eleven soli seven pence? Why don't you go rob a bank! Big deal with the gold inlay! Klein was shocked by the price.

With an unperturbed expression, he nodded gently. "Alright."

The salesperson took down the Ironheart wood cane and carefully handed it to Klein, seemingly afraid that Klein would drop and break the merchandise.

Klein took the cane and found it heavy. He tried moving with it and discovered that he could not sway it smoothly as he wanted.

"It's too heavy." Klein shook his head in relief.

This is not an excuse! The salesperson took back the cane and pointed at another three canes.

"This is made of walnut wood, created by Tingen's most famous cane artisan, Mr. Hayes. It's priced at ten soli three pence… This is made of ebony wood and inlaid with silver. It's an hard as iron, costing seven soli six pence… This is made from the core of a white boli tree and also inlaid with silver, costing seven soli ten pence…"

Klein tried each one of them and found them of appropriate weight. He then tapped them with his fingers to gain an understand of their hardness. Finally, he chose the cheapest one.

"I'll take the one made from ebony wood." Klein pointed at the cane with the silver inlay which the salesperson was holding.

"No problem, Sir. Please follow me to proceed with the payment. In the future, if this cane is scuffed or stained, you can hand it to us for handling for free." The salesperson led Klein to the counter.

Klein took the opportunity to release the four gold-pound notes from his tight grip and removed two of the smaller denominations.

"Good day, Sir. It will be seven soli six pence." The cashier behind the counter greeted with a smile.

Klein was planning on maintaining his gentlemanly image, but when he extended his hand with the one-gold pound note, he could not help but ask, "Can I get a discount?"

"Sir, what we have is all hand-crafted, so our costs are very high." the salesperson beside him answered. "Since our boss isn't here, we are unable to lower the prices."

The cashier behind the counter added, "Sir, sorry about that."

"Alright." Klein handed the note over and received the black silver-inlaid cane.

While waiting for the change to be given to him, he took a few steps back and distanced himself from them. He swung around his side arm as a test.

Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh!

The wind sounded heavy when the cane sliced through the air. Klein nodded in satisfaction.

He looked forward again, prepared to see notes and coins, but was appalled to see the red-vested salesperson retreating far away. The cashier behind the counter had retracted into a corner, leaning close to a double-barreled shotgun hanging to the wall.

The Loen Kingdom had a semi-regulated policy on firearms. To possess a firearm, one needed to apply for an all-purpose weapon usage certificate or a hunter's license. Regardless of which type, one could still not be in

possession of restricted military firearms such as repeaters, steam-pressured guns, or six-barrel machine guns.

An all-purpose weapon usage certificate could be used to purchase or store any kind of civilian firearm, but earning the certificate was extremely troublesome. Even merchants of substantial standing might not be approved. A hunter's license was relatively easy. Even farmers in the suburbs could receive approval. However, the license was limited to hunting guns with restricted numbers. People with sizable assets would tend to apply for one to use it for self-defense in emergency situations, such as now…

Klein looked at the two wary salespeople as the corners of his mouth twitched. He chuckled dryly. "Not bad. This cane is perfect for swinging. I'm very pleased."

Realizing that he had no intention to assault them, the cashier behind the counter relaxed. He handed over the notes and coins he had taken out over with both hands.

Klein took a look at what he received and saw two five-soli notes, two one-soli notes, a five-pence coin, and a one-penny coin. He could not help but nod inwardly.

After a two-second pause, he ignored the way the salespeople looked at him and unfurled the four notes towards the light to ensure that the anti-counterfeit watermarks were present.

Klein put away the notes and coins when he was done. With the cane in hand, he tipped his hat and walked out of Wilker Clothing and Hats. He extravagantly spent six pence by taking a short-distance trackless carriage before transferring once before reaching home safe and sound.

After closing the door, he counted the eleven pounds and twelve soli notes thrice before placing them into the desk drawer. He then found the bronze revolver with the wooden grip.

Clink! Clang! Five brass bullets fell onto the table when Klein inserted the silver demon hunting bullets which had complicated patterns and the Dark Sacred Emblem into the revolver's cylinder.

Like before, he only inserted five rounds and left an empty spot to prevent any misfires. The remaining rounds were placed together with the five ordinary bullets in a small iron case.

Pa! He snapped the cylinder in place, giving him a sense of security.

He excitedly lodged the revolver into the holster at his armpit and buckled it securely. Then, he repeatedly practiced unbuckling and drawing the gun. He rested whenever his arms ached, and this continued until sunset when he heard the sounds of tenants walking along the corridor outside.

Phew! Klein let out a foul breath before putting his revolver back into his armpit holster.

Only then did he take off his formal suit and vest. He wore back his usual brownish-yellow coat and swung his arms to relax them.

Tap. Tap. Tap. He heard the sound of nearing footsteps before the twisting sound of an inserted key.

Melissa with her soft, black hair entered. Her nose twitched a little as she swept her gaze towards the unlit stove. The luster in her eyes dimmed slightly.

"Klein, I'll heat up the leftovers from last night. Benson will likely be home tomorrow." Melissa turned to look at her brother.

Klein had his hands in his pocket as he leaned against the edge of the desk. He smiled and said, "No, let's eat out."

"Eat out?" Melissa questioned in surprise.

"How does Silver Crown Restaurant at Daffodil Street sound? I heard they serve delicious food," suggested Klein.

"B-but…" Melissa was still confused.

Klein grinned and said, "To celebrate my new job."

"You found a job?" Melissa's voice rose unknowingly, "B-but, isn't the Tingen University interview tomorrow?"

"Another job." Klein gave a faint smile before fishing the stacked notes from the drawer. "They even gave me an advance of four weeks' pay."

Melissa looked at the gold pounds and soli as she widened her eyes.

"Goddess… You- they- what job did you get?"

This… Klein's expression froze as he deliberated on his words.

"A security company whose mission is to seek, collect, and protect ancient relics. They were in need of a professional consultant. It's a five-year contract, earning me three pounds a week."

"Were you vexing over this last night?" asked Melissa after a moment of silence.

Klein nodded. "Yes, although being an academic at Tingen University is respectable, I prefer this job."

"Well, it isn't bad either." Melissa gave an encouraging smile. She asked half-suspiciously and half-curiously, "Why would they give you an advance payment of four full weeks?"

"It's because we need to move. We need a place with more rooms and a bathroom that belongs to us," said Klein while grinning and shrugging.

He felt that his smile was impeccable, just short of the word: "Surprised?"

Melissa was stunned momentarily before she suddenly spoke out in a fluster, "Klein, we are living quite well now. My occasional grumblings of not having a personal bathroom is just a habit. Do you remember Jenny? She lived next door to us, but ever since her father was injured and lost his job, they had no choice but to move to Lower Street. The family of five ended up staying in one room, with three of them sleeping in a bunk bed and two of them sleeping on the ground. They even wish to rent the remaining empty spot to someone…

"Compared to them, we are really very lucky. Don't waste your salary on this matter. Besides, I love Mrs. Smyrin's bakery."

Sis, why is your reaction completely different from how it played out in my head… Klein's expression went blank when he heard his sister.

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CHAPTER 24
PENNY-PINCHER

The sky outside was gradually dyed golden as Klein looked into Melissa's eyes. He was momentarily at a loss for words; none of the lines he prepared could be used.

He coughed lightly twice as he quickly racked his brains.

"Melissa, this isn't a waste of salary. In the future, my colleagues, as well as Benson's colleagues might visit. Are we going to host them in such a place? When Benson and I get married and have wives, are we still going to sleep in bunk beds?"

"None of you have fiancées yet, right? We can wait a little while and save up more money in the meantime," answered Melissa in a logically concise manner.

"No, Melissa. This is a societal rule." Klein was stumped and could only count on lofty principles. "Since I'm earning three pounds a week, I should look like I'm earning three pounds a week."

To be honest, having rented an apartment before with others, Zhou Mingrui was no stranger to his present living conditions as Klein. He was very used to it, but it was because of his past experience that he knew how inconvenient such an environment was for a girl. Furthermore, his goal was to become a Beyonder and study mysticism to find his way home. In the future, he was bound to conduct some magical rituals at home. Having too many people in the apartment building made incidents prone to happen.

Klein saw that Melissa was about to continue arguing, and hurriedly added, "Don't worry. I'm not planning to get a bungalow, but probably a terrace. Basically, it has to have a bathroom we can call ours. Also, I like Mrs. Smyrin's bread, Tingen biscuits, and lemon cakes too. We can first consider places near Iron Cross Street and Daffodil Street."

Melissa pouted her lips slightly and fell silent for a moment before nodding slowly.

"Besides, I'm in no rush to move either. We have to wait for Benson to return," said Klein with a chuckle. "We can't have him be shocked when he opens the door to find nothing, right? Imagine him saying in astonishment —'Where are my things? Where are my siblings? Where's my home? Is this my home? Did I make a mistake? Goddess, wake me up if this is a dream. Why is my home gone after a few days of absence!?'"

His mimicking of Benson's tone made Melissa involuntarily smile as her eyes scrunched up and revealed her shallow dimples.

"No, Mr. Franky would definitely be waiting by the door to get Benson to hand over the apartment keys. Benson wouldn't even be able to come up." The girl disparaged the miserly landlord.

In the Moretti household, all of them would like to make Mr. Franky the butt of their jokes for every trivial and major matter. It was all thanks to Benson who initiated this practice.

"Right, there's no way he would switch locks for the tenants after us," Klein echoed with a smile. He pointed at the door and quipped, "Miss Melissa, shall we head to Silver Crown Restaurant for a celebration?"

Melissa sighed gently and said, "Klein, do you know Selena? My classmate and my good friend?"

Selena? An image of a girl with wine-red hair and deep brown eyes surfaced in Klein's mind. Her parents were Evernight Goddess believers.

They had named her after St. Selena as a blessing. She was not yet sixteen, and was half a year younger than Melissa. She was a happy, cheerful, and outgoing lady.

"Yes." Klein nodded in affirmation.

"Her elder brother, Chris, is a lawyer. He currently earns close to three pounds a week as well. His fiancée works part time as a typist," described Melissa. "They have been engaged for more than four years. To ensure a decent and stable life after marriage, they are still saving money to this very day. They have yet to go down the wedding aisle and plan to wait for at least another year. According to Selena, there are many people like her brother. They typically get married after twenty-eight. You have to be make advanced preparations and save up. Don't squander your money."

It's just a meal at a restaurant. Is there a need to preach at me… Klein was rendered at a loss whether to laugh or cry. After a few seconds of thought, he said, "Melissa, I'm already earning three pounds a week, and I'll have increments every year. There's no need for you to worry."

"But we need to save some money in the case of any unexpected emergencies. For example, what if that security company suddenly closes down? I have a classmate whose father's company went bankrupt. He had to find temporary work at the pier and their living conditions turned terrible instantly. She had no choice but to quit school," advised Melissa with a serious expression.

…Klein extended his hand to cover his face. "T-that security company and the government… Yes, has some connections with the government. It will not easily close down."

"But even the government isn't stable. After every election, if the party in power changes, many people will have their positions stripped off. It turns into a mess." Melissa retorted in an unyielding manner.

…*Sis, you sure know a lot.*… Klein found the humor in his exasperation as he shook his head. "Alright then…

"Then I'll boil some soup with the leftovers from yesterday. Buy some pan-fried fish, a slab of black-pepper beef, a small bottle of butter, and a cup of malt beer for me. Anyway, there should still be some celebration."

They were commonly sold items by hawkers on Iron Cross Street. A piece of pan-fried fish was six to eight pence; a not-so-big piece of black-peppered beef was five pence; a cup of malt beer was a penny; and a bottle of butter weighing about a quarter pound was four pence, but buying a pound of butter would only cost one soli three pence.

The original Klein was responsible for buying ingredients during holidays, so he was no stranger to the prices. Klein did a mental estimate that Melissa would need about one soli six pence. Therefore, he took out two one-soli notes.

"Alright." Melissa did not object to Klein's proposal. She put down her backpack of stationery and took the notes.

When he saw his sister taking out a tiny bottle for the butter and pots for the other food before briskly walking to the door, Klein thought for a moment and shouted out to her. "Melissa, use the remaining money to buy some fruits."

There were many hawkers on Iron Cross Street who would buy low-quality or expiring fruits from other places. The residents were not outraged about this because the prices were extremely cheap. They could taste the magnificent flavors after removing the rotten parts, so it was a cheap enjoyment.

With that said, Klein took a few brisk steps forward and took out the remaining copper pennies from his pocket and stuffed it into his sister's palm.

"Ah?" Melissa's brown eyes looked at her brother in puzzlement.

Klein took two steps back and smiled. "Remember to go to Mrs. Smyrin's. Reward yourself with a tiny lemon cake."

"…” Melissa's mouth widened as she blinked. Finally, she said a single word, "Okay."

She quickly turned around, opened the door, and ran toward the stairwell.

…

A river tore through the land, with cedar and maple trees lining the banks; the air so fresh, it was intoxicating.

Klein, who was here to put closure to his interview, had his revolver with him. He held his cane and paid six pence for the public carriage. He walked down a cemented path and approached a three-story stone building which was shaded by greenery. It was Tingen University's administrative block.

"It's truly worthy of being one of the two major universities of the Loen Kingdom…” With this being his first time here, Klein sighed as he walked.

Compared to Tingen University, Khoy University right across the river could only be described as shabby.

"Heave-ho!"

"Heave-ho!"

Voices approached slowly as two rowing boats made their way upstream across the Khoy River. Oars were being rowed in an orderly and rhythmic manner.

This was a rowing sport that was popular among all the universities in Loen Kingdom. With Klein requiring a scholarship to finance his university

studies, he, Welch, and the others had joined Khoy University's rowing club and were pretty good at it.

"This is youth…" Klein stopped and looked into the distance before sighing wistfully.

Such sights would no longer be seen in another week since school would break for summer.

As he proceeded down a road sheltered by trees, Klein stopped by a three-story stone building. He entered after successfully registering himself and easily found his way to the office of the person who had tended to him the other time.

Knock! Knock! Knock! He knocked lightly on the half-closed door.

"Come in." A man's voice sounded from inside.

A middle-aged instructor dressed in a white shirt and black tuxedo frowned when he saw Klein enter. "There's another hour until the interview."

"Mr. Stone, do you still remember me? I'm a student of Senior Associate Professor Cohen, Klein Moretti. You have read my recommendation letter before." Klein smiled as he took off his hat.

Harvin Stone stroked his black beard and asked, puzzled, "Is there something wrong? I'm not in charge of interviews."

"Here's the situation. I've already found a job, so I won't be participating in the interview today." Klein gave his reason for coming.

"I see…" When Harvin Stone learned of the reason, he stood up and reached out his right hand. "Congratulations. You are really a polite lad. I will inform the professor and senior associate professors."

Klein shook Harvin's hand and planned on making a little small talk before bidding him farewell when he heard a familiar voice behind him.

"Moretti, you found another job?"

Klein turned around and saw an elder with a head of silver hair that left a deep impression on his silhouette. His deep, blue eyes sunk deep into his face and he had few wrinkles. The man looked sharp in his black tuxedo.

"Good afternoon, Mentor. Mr. Azik," he hurriedly greeted. "Why are the two of you here?"

The elder was none other than Senior Associate Professor of Khoy University's history department, who was also his mentor, Mr. Quentin Cohen. Beside Cohen was a middle-aged man with bronze-colored skin of average build. He did not have any facial hair and held a newspaper in his hand. His hair was black and his pupils brown. His facial features were soft as his eyes revealed an indescribable sense of weariness like it had seen the vicissitudes of life. Beneath his right ear was a black mole which could only be seen if looked at carefully.

Klein recognized him since he was Khoy University's history department lecturer, Mr. Azik, who often helped the original Klein. He enjoyed debating with his mentor, Senior Associate Professor Cohen. They often had a clash of opinion, but even so, they were best friends; otherwise, they would not have enjoyed meeting up for a chat.

Cohen nodded and said with a relaxed tone, "Azik and I are here to participate in an academic conference. What kind of job did you get?"

"It's a security company which seeks, collects, and protects ancient relics. They were in need of a professional consultant and are paying me three pounds a week." Klein repeated what he said to his sister yesterday. Following that, he explained, "As you know, I prefer exploring history, instead of summarizing it."

Cohen nodded slightly and said, "Everyone has their own choices. I'm very happy that you bothered to come to Tingen University to inform them instead of just not showing up."

At that moment, Azik interjected, "Klein, do you know what happened to Welch and Naya? I read on the newspapers that they were killed by burglars."

The incident has become a case of armed burglary? And why it is already on the newspapers? Klein was taken aback as he weighed over his words.

"I'm not very clear of the specifics as well. Welch had obtained a diary of the Solomon Empire's Antigonus family from the Fourth Epoch. My help on interpreting it was sought. I helped them for the first few days, but I later got busy with job hunting. The police even came to me two days ago."

He deliberately divulged the matter regarding the Solomon Empire and the Antigonus family in hopes of getting any information from the two history teachers.

"The Fourth Epoch…" Cohen muttered with a frown.

The bronze-skinned and weary eyes of Azik went blank first before he inhaled. He rubbed his temple with his newspaper-wielding left hand and said, "Antigonus… rings a bell… But why can't I remember…"

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CHAPTER 25
CATHEDRAL

While Azik muttered to himself, he subconsciously shot a glance at Quentin Cohen, seemingly hoping for hints to jolt his memories.

Cohen, with his deep set blue eyes, shook his head without any hesitation. "I do not have any impression of it."

“…Alright then. Perhaps, it just shares a root word." Azik lowered his left hand and gave a self-deprecating laugh.

Klein was rather disappointed with the outcome, and he could not help but add on. "Mentor, Mr. Azik, as the both of you know, I'm very interested in exploring and restoring the history of the Fourth Epoch. If you ever recall anything or obtain relevant information, could you please write to me?"

"No problem." As a result of Klein's actions today, the silver-haired Senior Associate Professor was rather pleased with him.

Azik also nodded and said, "Is your address still the same as before?"

"For now, but I'll be moving soon. I'll write a letter to inform you when the time comes," replied Klein in a respectful manner.

Cohen shook his black cane and said, "It's indeed about time you moved to a place with a better environment."

At that moment, Klein caught a glance at the newspaper in Azik's hand. He deliberated on his words before saying, "Mentor, Mr. Azik, what did the

newspapers say regarding Welch and Naya? I only learned a little from the police who were in charge of the investigations."

Azik was just about to answer when Cohen suddenly pulled out the pocket watch that was linked to his black tuxedo by a golden chain.

Click! He opened the pocket watch and tapped his cane.

"The meeting is about to begin. Azik, we can't be delayed any further. Give the newspaper to Moretti."

"Alright." Azik handed over the newspaper he had read to Klein. "We will be going upstairs. Remember to write a letter. Our address has yet to change; it's still the Khoy University History Department Office. Haha."

He laughed as he turned around and left the room with Cohen.

Klein took off his hat and bowed. After watching the two gentlemen leave, he bade farewell to owner of the office, Harvin Stone. He proceeded across the corridor and slowly exited the gray three-story building.

With his back against the sun, he lifted up his cane and unfolded the newspaper and saw the title: "Tingen Morning Post."

Tingen sure has all sorts of newspapers and magazines… There is the Morning Post, Evening Post, the Honest Paper, Backlund Daily Tribune, Tussock Times, family magazines and book reviews… Klein casually recalled the several names that surfaced in his mind. Of course, a number of them were not local. They were distributed via steam locomotives.

Now that the papermaking and printing industries were getting more advanced, the cost of a newspaper has already decreased to the price of a penny. The audience it reached also grew wider and wider.

Klein did not scrutinize the details of the newspaper, quickly flipping to the News section with the report "Armed Burglary Murder."

“…According to the police department, the scene at Mr. Welch's home was a horrible sight. There was missing gold, jewelry, and money, as well as anything valuable that could be easily taken away. Not even a penny was left behind. There is reason to believe that this was done by a merciless group of criminals that would not hesitate to kill the innocent, such as Mister Welch and Madam Naya, if sight of their faces are caught."

"This is outright contempt for our kingdom's laws! This is a challenge to public security! No one wishes to have such an encounter! Of course, one piece of good news is that the police have located the murderer and captured the main culprit. We will do our best to provide news on any follow-ups."

"Reporter: John Browning."

The matter has been handled and covered up… As Klein walked through the boulevard, he nodded in a hardly noticeable manner.

He flipped through the newspaper as he strolled down the path, reading the other news articles and serials in the process.

Suddenly, he felt the hairs on the back of his neck stand, as though needles were stabbing at him.

Someone is watching me? Observing me? Monitoring me? Various thoughts welled up in him as Klein had a faint realization.

Back on Earth, he had once felt an invisible gaze before ultimately discovering the source of the gaze. However, it had never felt as crystal clear as what he was experiencing now!

This was the same in the original Klein's memory fragments!

Was it the transmigration or the mysterious luck enhancement ritual which enhanced my sixth sense? Klein fought back the urge to seek out the observer. Using his knowledge from reading novels and watching movies,

he slowed his pace and put away the newspaper before looking toward Khoy River.

Following that, he acted as if he was admiring the scenery, slowly turning his head in different directions. He acted natural as he turned around, taking in everything with his eyes.

Other than the trees, grassy plains, and students passing by in the distance, there was no other person there.

But Klein was certain that someone was watching him!

This… Klein's heart raced as his blood surged through his body with the intense thumping.

He unfolded the papers and covered half his face, afraid that anyone would discover anything wrong with his expression.

Meanwhile, he clenched his cane and readied himself to draw his gun.

One step. Two steps. Three steps. Klein proceeded forward slowly.

The feeling of being spied upon remained, but there was no sudden outburst of danger.

He walked through the boulevard in a somewhat stiff manner and arrived at the waiting point for public carriages when a carriage pulled up coincidentally.

"Iron… Zoute… No, Champagne Street." Klein continually dismissed his thoughts.

He originally planned on heading home immediately, but he was afraid of leading an observer of unknown motives to his apartment. Following that, he thought of heading to Zouteland Street to seek help from the Nighthawks or his colleagues. However, he thought otherwise, afraid that he would end

up alerting his enemy and expose the Nighthawks. Therefore, he casually chose somewhere else.

"Six pence," the ticketing officer replied routinely.

Klein did not bring any gold pounds with him today. He had hidden the money in the usual spot and had only taken two soli notes with him. And before he came, he had spent the same amount of money, leaving him with one soli six pence. Therefore, he took out all his coins and handed to the ticketing officer.

He found a seat after boarding the carriage, and finally with the closing of the carriage doors, Klein felt that unease of being watched vanish!

He exhaled slowly as he felt his limbs tingle slightly.

What do I do?

What should I do next? Klein looked out the carriage as he racked his brains for a solution.

Until he was clear about the intentions of the person watching him, Klein had to assume that there was malicious intent!

Many thoughts sprang up in his mind, but he dismissed them. He had never experienced such an event, and had to use a few minutes to organize his ideas.

He had to notify the Nighthawks; only they could truly get rid of this threat!

But I can't head there directly or I might expose them. Perhaps, that might be their goal…

Following this train of thought, Klein crudely surmised various possibilities as his thoughts turned clearer.

Fffffff! He exhaled as he regained some semblance of composure. He looked seriously at the scenery outside flying past him.

There were no accidents along the way to Champagne Street, but when Klein opened the door and stepped out of the car, he immediately had the uneasy feeling of being watched again!

He acted as though he had not sensed anything. He took the newspaper and his cane, slowly making his way in the direction of Zouteland Street.

But he did not enter that street. Instead, he took another route to the Red Moonlight Street behind. There was a beautiful white plaza there, as well as a large cathedral with a pointy roof!

Saint Selena Cathedral!

The Tingen headquarters of the Church of the Evernight Goddess!

As a believer, there was nothing odd about him participating in Mass or pray on his day off.

The cathedral exhibited a design similar to Earth's Gothic style. It also had a tall, black, and imposing clock tower, situated between blue and red checkered windows.

Klein stepped into the cathedral and followed an aisle into the prayer hall. Along the way, the stained windows were comprised of red and blue glass patterns that allowed colored light to shine into the hall. The blue was closer to black, the red the same color as the crimson moon. It made the surroundings seem unusually dark and mysterious.

The feeling of being watched vanished. Klein acted unfazed as he walked toward the open prayer hall.

There were no high windows here. The deep darkness was emphasized, but behind the arc-shaped holy altar, on the wall directly opposite the door,

were about twenty circular fist-sized holes that allowed the radiant sunlight to enter the hall.

It was akin to pedestrians seeing the starry sky when suddenly looking up into the dark night to see the shimmering stars in all their nobility, purity, and holiness.

Even though Klein had always believed that gods could be analyzed and understood, he could not help but lower his head here.

The bishop was preaching in a gentle tone as Klein silently made his way down the aisle that split the pews into two columns. He searched for an empty area close to the passageway before slowly taking a seat.

Leaning his cane onto the back of the pew in front of him, Klein took off his hat and placed it onto his lap together with the newspaper. Then he clasped his hands together and lowered his head.

The entire process was done slowly and routinely as though he was really there to pray.

Klein closed his eyes as he silently listened to the bishop's voice in the darkness.

"Lacking clothes and food, they have no covering in the cold.

"They are drenched by rains, and huddle around the rocks for lack of shelter.

"They are orphans snatched from the breast, hope lost on them; they are the poor that have been forced off the proper path.

"The Evernight did not forsake them, but bestowed them with love [1]."

…

Echoes amplified as they entered his ear. Klein saw a swath of darkness in front of him as he felt his spirit and mind cleansed.

He calmly took it in until the bishop finished his preachings and ended Mass.

After which, the bishop opened a confessional door beside him. Men and women began lining up.

Klein opened his eyes and donned his hat once more. With his cane and newspaper, he stood up and found his place in line.

It was his turn after more than twenty minutes.

He stepped in and closed the door behind him. There was darkness in front of him.

"My child, what do you wish to say?" The bishop's voice sounded from behind the wooden damper screen.

Klein took out the 'Seventh Unit, Special Operations Department' badge from his pocket and handed it over to the bishop through an opening.

"Someone is tailing me. I wish to find Dunn Smith." As though he had been infected by the silent darkness, his tone turned softer as well.

The bishop took the badge and after a few seconds of silence, he said, "Turn right from the confession booth and walk to the end. There will be a secret door to the side. Someone will lead the way after you enter."

As he spoke, he pulled a rope inside the room, causing a particular priest to hear a chime.

Klein retrieved his badge and took off his hat and pressed it to his chest. He gave a slight bow before turning around and exiting.

After confirming that the feeling of being watched was gone, he wore his halved top hat. Without any excessive emotions, he held his cane and turned right, until he arrived by an arched altar.

He found the secret door in the wall facing his side. He silently opened it before sneaking in quickly.

The secret door closed silently as a middle-aged, black-robed priest appeared under the illumination of gas lamps.

"What is it?" the priest asked tersely.

Klein showed his badged and repeated what he said to the bishop.

The middle-aged priest did not ask further questions. He turned around and proceeded forward in silence.

Klein nodded and took off his hat. With his black cane, he followed silently in tow.

Rozanne had once mentioned that heading left from the crossroads towards Chanis Gate would reach Saint Selena Cathedral.

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CHAPTER 26
PRACTICE

Tap! Tap! Tap! The sound of footsteps echoed through the dark, narrow corridor, which was otherwise silent.

Klein kept his back straight as he kept up with the priest's pace. He did not pose questions or chat idly with him, remaining silent like a windless body of water.

After passing through the heavily guarded passageway, the priest opened a secret door with a key and pointed down a stairwell made of stone. "Turn left at the intersection to reach Chanis Gate."

"May Goddess bless you." Klein gestured the sign of the crimson moon on his chest.

Commoners practiced etiquette, while the religious partook in ritual blessings.

"Praise the Lady." The priest returned with the same gesture.

Klein did not speak further as he walked down the dark stone stairwell with the aid of the refined inlaid gas lamps on both sides of the wall.

Midway, he subconsciously turned back and saw the priest standing at the entrance. He was in the shadows and appeared like an immobile wax statue.

Klein looked away and continued to proceed down. It did not take long before he hit ground laid with ice-cold stone slabs. This led him to the intersection.

He did not turn towards Chanis Gate because Dunn Smith, who had recently finished his shift, was definitely not there.

He turned right and saw the familiar path. Klein went back up another flight of stairs and appeared inside Blackthorn Security Company.

Seeing doors that were tightly shut or half-closed, he did not rush into them. Instead, he went to the reception and saw a brown-haired girl focused on a magazine with a sweet smile.

"Hi, Rozanne." Klein came to her side and deliberately rapped the table.

Knock! Rozanne stood up suddenly and knocked over a chair and said in a fluster, "Hi, nice weather today. Y-you, Klein, why are you here?"

She patted her chest and heaved a few sighs of relief. She was like a young lady afraid that her father had caught her skiving.

"I need to find Captain," answered Klein simply.

“…You gave me a fright. I thought Captain came out." Rozanne glared at Klein. "Don't you know how to knock!? Hmph, you should be thankful that I'm a tolerant and kind woman. Well, I do prefer the term lady… Is there a reason why you are looking for Captain? He's in the room opposite Mrs. Orianna."

Even though he felt uptight, Klein was so amused by Rozanne he smiled. He pondered for a moment before saying, "A secret."

"…” Rozanne's eyes widened and while she reeled in her disbelief, Klein did a slight bow before bidding her farewell.

He went through the reception's partition and knocked on the door of the first office on the right.

"Come in." Dunn Smith's deep and gentle voice sounded.

Klein pushed the door and opened before closing the door behind him. He took off his hat and bowed. "Good morning, Captain."

"Good morning, how can I help you?" Dunn's black windbreaker and hat were hanging on a clothes stand to his side. He was dressed in a white shirt and black vest. Even though his hairline was rather high, his gray eyes were deep, and he appeared much fresher.

"Someone is following me." Klein honestly answered without any embellishments.

Dunn leaned back and clasped his hands together. His deep gray eyes silently looked at Klein's eyes. He did not follow up on the topic of being followed and instead, asked, "You came from the cathedral?"

"Yes." Klein answered.

Dunn nodded gently. He did not comment on its merits or demerits as he switched the subject back. "It might be that Welch's father doesn't believe the cause of death that we reported and had hired a private investigator from Wind City to investigate the matter."

Midseashire's Constant City was also known as Wind City. It was a region with extremely advanced coal and steel industries. It was one of the top three cities of Loen Kingdom.

Before waiting for Klein to give his opinion, Dunn continued, "It might also be a result of that notebook. Heh, we happened to be investigating where Welch received the Antigonus family's notebook. Of course, we can't eliminate other people or organizations that might be seeking out this notebook."

"What should I do?" Klein asked in a serious voice.

Without a question, he hoped that it was the first reason.

Dunn did not immediately answer him. He raised his coffee mug and took a mouthful, his eyes not showing the sliver of a ripple. "Return the way you came, then do anything you wish."

"Anything?" Klein returned with a question.

"Anything." Dunn nodded with certainty. "Of course, do not scare them off or violate the law."

"Alright." Klein took a deep breath and bade him farewell. He left the room and went back underground.

He turned left at the intersection, and bathed in the light from the gas lamps on the two walls, he arrived silently to the empty, dark, and cold passageway.

The sound of his footsteps echoed, making him sound more alone and terrified.

Soon, Klein arrived at the stairwell. He went forward and saw a shadow standing there—the middle-aged priest.

The two did not say a word when they met. The priest turned around in silence and made way.

He proceeded silently before returning to the prayer hall. The circular holes behind the arched altar were still as pure and bright, while the darkness and silence of the building's interior remained. There were still men and women lining outside the confessional, but much fewer than before.

After waiting for a moment, Klein slowly left the prayer hall with his cane and newspaper as though nothing had ever happened, successfully leaving Saint Selena Cathedral.

The moment he walked out, he saw the burning sun. He immediately regained the familiar feeling of being observed. He felt like he was prey

being eyed by a hawk.

Suddenly, a question surfaced in his mind.

Why didn't the "observer" follow me into the cathedral? Although I could have still used the dark environment and the priest to conceal my temporary disappearance, would it be hard for him to continue monitoring me by pretending to pray? If he had not done something wrong, there would be no problem walking in with an open and aboveboard manner, right? Unless the person has some dark history, making him afraid of the Church or fear the bishop, knowing that he might have the powers of a Beyonder.

In that case, the likelihood of it being a private investigator is very slim… Klein exhaled and no longer acted as nervous as he was previously. He took a casual stroll before going around and to the back of Zouteland Street.

He stopped at an ancient-styled building with mottled walls. The address on the door was '3.' Its name was the Zouteland Shooting Club.

Part of the police department's underground shooting range was opened to the public as a way to earn some additional funds.

Klein went in and the feeling of being watched vanished instantly. He took this opportunity to hand over his Special Operations Department badge to the attendant.

After a short verification, he was led underground to a small, confined shooting range.

"Ten-meter target." Klein informed the attendant simply. Next, he retrieved the revolver from his armpit holster and the box of brass bullets from his pocket.

The feeling of being suddenly targeted made his desire to protect himself win over his procrastination. Therefore, he could not wait to come over to practice his shooting.

Pa! After the attendant left, he flicked open the cylinder and removed the silver demon hunting bullets. Following that, he filled the cylinder with normal brass bullets.

This time, neither did he leave an empty spot to prevent misfiring, nor did he take off his formal attire and halved top hat. He planned on practicing in his usual getup. After all, it was impossible for him to shout "wait a minute, let me change into something more comfortable" after encountering an enemy or danger.

Click! Klein closed the cylinder and rolled it with his thumb.

Suddenly, he held the gun in both hands, raised it up straight, and aimed at the target more than ten meters away.

However, he was in no hurry to shoot. Instead, he recalled his experience at military training [1] , how to form a line with the iron-sights, and knowledge about a gun's recoil.

Rustle! Rustle! While his clothes rustled, Klein repeated his aiming and his holding stance. He was as serious as a student taking a high-school exam.

After repeating it several times, he retreated to the wall and sat down on a long, soft bench. He placed the revolver to the side, began massaging his arms, and rested for quite a while.

He spent a few minutes recalling his practice before he picked up the revolver with the wooden handle and bronze cylinder. He got into standard firing position and pulled the trigger.

Bang! His arm trembled as his body moved back from the recoil. The bullet missed the target.

Bang! Bang! Bang! Drawing from the experience he gained, he shot again and again until all six rounds were finished.

I'm starting to hit the target… Klein stepped back and sat down again as he exhaled.

Click! He swung the cylinder out and allowed the six shells to fall to the ground. Then, without a change in expression, he inserted the remaining brass rounds in.

After relaxing his arm, Klein stood up again and returned to his shooting position.

Bang! Bang! Bang! Ringing shots echoed as the target shook. Klein practiced and rested repeatedly. He expended all thirty normal rounds and the remaining five from before. He gradually hit the target and started aiming for the bull's eye.

He swung his sore shoulders and threw out the final five shells. He lowered his head and inserted the demon hunting bullets with the complicated patterns back into gun, leaving an empty spot to prevent misfiring.

After putting the revolver back into his armpit holster, Klein patted the dust from his body and walked out the shooting range to return to the streets.

The feeling of being observed arose once again. Klein felt calmer than he previously felt as he slowly walked to Champagne Street. He spent four pence on a tracked carriage to return to Iron Cross Street before returning to his own apartment.

The feeling of being spied upon vanished without a trace. Klein took out his keys and opened the door to see a short-haired man nearing his thirties and wearing a linen shirt seated at a desk.

His heart tensed up before relaxing immediately. Klein greeted with a smile, "Good morning—no—good afternoon, Benson."

This man was none other than Klein's and Melissa's elder brother, Benson Moretti. He was only twenty-five this year, but his receding hairline and

decrepit appearance made him look nearly thirty.

He had black hair and brown eyes, resembling Klein somewhat, but he lacked the faint scholarly air which Klein had.

"Good afternoon, Klein. How was the interview?" Benson stood up as he grinned.

His black coat and halved top hat were hanging on a protrusion of their bunk bed.

"Horrible," Klein replied in a deadpan manner.

When he saw Benson stunned, Klein chuckled and added, "In fact, I didn't even participate in the interview. I found a job ahead of the interview and it pays three pounds a week…"

He repeated what he told Melissa again.

Benson's expression calmed down as he shook his head with a laugh. "It feels like I'm seeing a child grow up… Well, this job is pretty good." He sighed and said, "It's great that the first thing I heard is such good news after being away for work. Let's celebrate tonight and buy some beef?"

Klein smiled. "Sure, but I believe Melissa will feel the pinch. Let's buy some ingredients later in the afternoon? Let's bring at least three soli? Well, to be honest, a pound exchanges for twenty soli, and one soli exchanges for twelve pence. There are even denominations like the halfpence and quarterpence. Such a coin system just goes against logic. It's so troublesome. I think it must be one of the most foolish coin system in the world."

When he said that, he saw Benson's expression turn stern. Feeling a little unease, he wondered if he had said anything wrong.

Could it be that in the lost memory fragments of the original Klein, Benson was an outright, extreme nationalist who showed no tolerance for any negativity? Benson took a few steps and refuted him with a stern expression. "No, it is not one of, but the most foolish coin system."

Not one of! Klein was taken aback, but he quickly snapped to his senses. He looked at his brother in the eye and laughed.

Indeed, Benson was great at mocking humor.

Benson lifted the corners of his lips and said in all seriousness, "You should understand that to institute a reasonable and simple coin system, one needs to know how to count and grasp the decimal system. Unfortunately, there are too few talents among those important figures."

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CHAPTER 27
SIBLINGS' DINNER

It's simply sharp and incisive… Klein burst out in laughter. Using the rich experience he had from his previous incarnation, he added another insult. "In fact, there is no evidence to suggest that those important figures have any brains at all."

"Good! Very good!" Benson roared with laughter as he gave a thumbs up. "Klein, you are a lot more humorous than before."

After taking a breath, he continued, "I have to go to the pier in the afternoon. I'm only off work tomorrow. After that I'll have time… to go to Tingen City Housing Improvement Company with the both of you. Let's see if they have cheap and good terrace houses for rent. Also, I need to pay Mr. Franky a visit."

"Our landlord?" the perplexed Klein asked. *Does our current landlord have some terrace houses from pretty good districts under his name?*

Benson shot his brother a glance and said, amused, "Have you forgotten the one-year rental contract we have with him? It has only been six months."

"Hiss…” Klein immediately drew a gasp of cold air.

He had really forgotten the matter!

Although rent was paid once a week, the lease was a year long. If they were to move now, it was equivalent to a breach in contract. If they were taken to court, they would have to compensate large sums of money!

"You are still lacking in societal experience." Benson touched his receding black hairline and said wistfully, "This was a clause I fought so hard back then. If not, Mr. Franky was only willing to lease it to us for three months each contract. To those with money, landlords would sign leases for a year, two years, or even three years to seek stable income. But for us—the past us—and our neighbors, landlords would have to be constantly worried that something bad might happen, depriving them of their rent. Therefore, they would only sign short-term contracts.

"In that case, they can offer to raise prices according to the situation." Klein summarized and added, using the original Klein's memories and his own experience as a tenant.

Benson sighed and said, "This is the cruel reality of today's society. Alright, you don't have to worry. The issue with the contract can be easily resolved. To be frank, even if we owe him a week's rent, Mr. Franky would have immediately thrown us out and confiscated whatever valuable items we have. After all, his intelligence is below that of a curly-haired baboon's. There's no way he can comprehend overly complicated matters."

Upon hearing this, Klein suddenly recalled a particular Sir Humphrey's meme. He shook his head and said seriously, "No, Benson. You are wrong."

"Why?" Benson was puzzled.

"Mr. Franky's intelligence is still slightly higher than a baboon's," Klein replied in all seriousness. Just as Benson seemed to smile in response, he added, "If he is on form."

"Haha." Benson lost it and burst out in laughter.

After a series of rapturous laughter, he pointed at Klein, momentarily unable to put his thoughts in words. Only then, he returned to the topic at hand.

"Of course, as a gentleman, we cannot employ such shameless tactics. I will discuss this with Mr. Franky tomorrow. Believe me, he's easily convinced, easily."

Klein had no doubts regarding Benson's point. The existence of the gas pipes was excellent proof.

After some idle chatter between the brothers, the remnants of pan-fried fish from the previous night were made into a soup with some vegetables. During the boiling process, the steam moistened the rye bread.

Smearing a little butter on the bread, Klein and Benson had a simple meal, but they were very satisfied with it. After all the fragrance and sweetness of butter brought them endless aftertastes.

After Benson left, Klein headed to the Lettuce and Meat market with three Soli notes and some spare pennies. He spent six pence on a pound of beef and seven pence on a fresh and succulent fish with few bones. Additionally, he bought potatoes, peas, radishes, rhubarbs, lettuce, and turnips, as well as spices such as rosemary, basil, cumin, and cooking oils.

During this entire time, he continued to feel like he was being watched, but there was no physical interaction.

After spending some time at Smyrin Bakery, Klein returned home and began weight-lifting with heavier items such as books to train his arm strength.

He had planned to exercise by military boxing, which he learned from his compulsory military stint for students. However, he had already forgotten the radio exercise routines from school, much less boxing which was only taught during the military stints. Exasperated, he could only do something simpler.

Klein did not overexert himself since it would lead to fatigue and thus put him in greater danger. He took an appropriate break and began reading the

original Klein's notes and study material. He wished to read anything regarding the Fourth Epoch again.

…

In the evening, Benson and Melissa sat in front of a desk. The food was placed neatly like children in upper primary school.

The fragrances of the dishes were composed of a rich melody of scents—the soul captivating fragrance of the stewed beef, the obviously tender potatoes, the sweetness of the thick pea soup, the mellow flavors of the stewed rhubarb, and the sweetness of the buttered rye bread.

Benson gulped a mouthful of saliva as he turned around to see Klein placing a crispy fish onto a plate. He felt the fragrance of the oil permeate through his nostrils into his throat and then into his stomach.

Groan! His stomach made a distinct protest.

Klein rolled up his sleeves and held up a plate of fried fish before placing it in the middle of the tidied desk. Following that, he returned to the cupboard and took out two large cups of ginger beer and placed them where he and Benson sat.

He smiled at Melissa and took out a lemon pudding as if he were performing a magic trick. "We'll have beer, while you'll have this."

“…Thank you." Melissa took the lemon pudding.

When Benson saw this, he raised his calm and said with a smile, "This is to celebrate Klein's finding of a decent job."

Klein raised his cup and clinked it with Benson before clinking it with Melissa's lemon pudding. "Praise the Lady!"

Gulp. He tilted his head back and drank it down. The spicy feeling warmed his gullet, bringing him great aftertastes.

Despite its name, ginger beer did not contain any alcohol. It was a mixture of the ginger's spiciness and the sourness of lemon that made it taste similar to beer. It was a kind of beverage that both women and children found acceptable. However, Melissa did not like the taste of it.

"Praise the Lady!" Benson drank a mouthful as well while Melissa took a nibble of the lemon pudding. She chewed at it repeatedly before swallowing it down unwillingly.

"Give it a try." Klein put down his cup and picked up his fork and spoon and pointed at the tableful of food.

He was most pessimistic of his thick pea soup. After all, he had never eaten something so strange on Earth. All he could do was adapt the recipe from the original Klein's memory fragments.

As the eldest brother, Benson did not stand on ceremony as he dug up a spoonful of mashed potatoes and stuffed it into his mouth.

The beaten potatoes were boiled thoroughly and mixed with the faint taste of lard and just enough salt. It whetted his appetite and made him salivate.

"Not… bad… Not bad," praised Benson vaguely. "It's much more delicious than the one I had back at work. They only used butter."

This is one of my specialties after all… Klein accepted the praise. "It's all thanks to the teachings of the chef at Welch's place."

Melissa looked at the beef soup. The green basil leaves, the green lettuce heads, and the radishes were submerged in the colorless soup, covering the tender beef. The soup was clear and its fragrance tantalizing.

She forked a piece of beef and placed it in her mouth to chew. The beef retained a little chewiness despite being stewed tender. The mixture of salt, the sweetness from the radishes, and the spiciness from the basil leaves complemented the deliciousness of the beef.

"…" She seemed to give her approbation, but she could not stop her chewing.

Klein tasted it and felt that although it was delicious, it was not without regret. This was still far from his usual standard. After all, he was lacking in certain condiments and could only use replacements. It was no wonder it tasted different.

Of course, even with the best standards, one could only make do with the dishes they cooked personally.

Suddenly, his heart pained for Benson and Melissa who were stunted in their world view.

After swallowing a piece of beef, Klein picked up a piece of fried Tussock Fish which was sprinkled with cumin and rosemary. It was crispy on the outside and tender on the inside. The char was a perfect golden brown and the saltiness and oil fragrance intertwined as one.

Nodding slightly, Klein tried a piece of stewed rhubarb and found it palatable. It got rid of the cloyed taste of meat.

Finally, he mustered his courage and scooped a bowl of thick pea soup.

Too sweet and too sour… Klein could not help but frown.

However, after seeing Benson and Melissa looking satisfied from tasting it, he began suspecting his tastes. He could not help but down a mouthful of ginger beer to cleanse his tongue.

The siblings were stuffed by the end of the meal. They laid slumped in the chairs for quite a while.

"Let us praise the Lady once more!" Benson raised his ginger beer—which had only one mouthful left—as he said in satisfaction.

"Praise the Lady!" Klein downed the last bit of his beverage.

"Praise the Lady." Melissa finally put the last bit of lemon pudding into her mouth and enjoyed the flavors swishing through her mouth.

When Klein saw this, he took advantage of his tipsiness and smiled. "Melissa, that's not right. You should eat the thing you find most delicious thing at the beginning. That way, you can fully appreciate its most delicious aspects. Tasting it when you are filled and satiated will not do the food justice."

"No, it's still as delicious as it can be," answered Melissa firmly and stubbornly.

The siblings had a happy chat, and after digesting their meals, they cleaned up the plates, cutlery, and stored the oil which was used to fry the fish.

After busying themselves, it was revision time. One refreshed his accounting knowledge while another continued reading the study material and notes. Time was spent to its fullest.

At eleven, the siblings extinguished the gas lamp and went to bed after washing up.

…

Klein felt groggy as he stared at the darkness in front of him. A figure wearing a black windbreaker and halved top hat appeared suddenly in Klein's vision. It was Dunn Smith.

"Captain!" Klein jolted awake and knew he was dreaming.

Dunn's gray eyes remained calm, as though he was mentioning something trivial. "Someone has sneaked into your room. Pick up your revolver and force him to the corridor. Leave the rest to us."

Someone has sneaked into my room? The observer has finally taken action? Klein jumped in fright, but did not dare ask further. All he did was nod and say, "Alright!"

The scene before his eyes changed immediately as a swath of colors appeared like the bursting of bubbles.

Klein's eyes opened as he carefully turned his head. He looked toward the window and saw a thin but unfamiliar back standing at his desk, rummaging for something in silence.

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CHAPTER 28
SECRET ORDER

Badump! Badump! Badump!

Klein's heart began beating rapidly. It shrank into a clump before expanding abruptly. It made his body tremble gently.

There was an instant when he nearly forgot what he had to do until the lurking figure suddenly paused. The figure pricked his ears slightly as though listening for any changes.

Blood flowed back from his brain as Klein regained his basic cognitive abilities. He reached beneath the pillow for the wooden grip of the revolver.

He felt the firm but smooth feeling as he rapidly calmed down. He silently and slowly pulled out the revolver and aimed it at the trespasser's head.

To be honest, he had no confidence in striking the intruder. Although he was already able to stably hit the target during practice, a moving person and a fixed target were completely different. He was not arrogant enough to confound the two together.

However, he vaguely remembered something from his previous life; the general idea was that a nuclear weapon wielded the greatest strength before its launch.

The principle held in his current situation. The best deterrence was before he shot!

By not pulling the trigger or shooting blindly, the intruder was unable to determine whether or not he was a complete rookie who had an extremely high chance of missing him. His worries and fears would make him deliberate more, resulting in him restraining himself!

In an instant, another thought arose in him. It immediately made Klein turn decisive. He was not the kind of person who turned calmer when faced with danger; instead, he had already imagined the situation when he faced the observer—using intimidation instead of attacking.

The Foodaholic Empire had an idiom: Where there is precaution there will be no danger!

When Klein pointed his gun at the intruder, the thin man froze suddenly, as though he had sensed something.

Following that, he heard a voice that hid a chuckle.

"Good evening, Sir."

The scrawny man clasped both his hands together, and his body seemed to tense. Klein sat on the lower bunk, aimed the person's head with the revolver, and tried to speak as leisurely and as naturally as he could.

"Please raise both of your hands and turn around. Try to do it slow. To be frank, I am very timid and I get nervous easily. If you move too quickly, I can be frightened, and I can't guarantee that there won't be a situation where I misfire. Yes, that's right."

The scrawny man raised both of his hands and held them up near his head before turning his body bit by bit. The first thing that came into view was a black tight suit with neat buttons. Next, he caught a pair of brown eyebrows that were thick and sharp.

The intruder's deep blue eyes didn't reflect fear, but rather gazed upon Klein with the intensity of a ferocious beast. It seemed that if Klein were careless

for a second, the other person would leap forward and tear him to pieces.

He clenched the handle tightly as he tried his best to appear calm and indifferent.

It was only when the thin man faced him completely did Klein jerk his chin towards the door. He softly and gently said, "Sir, let's take this outside. Do not disturb the beautiful dreams of others. Oh, do keep your motions slow. Lighten your footsteps a little too. It's basic courtesy for a gentleman."

The thin man's cold pupils rolled as he swept Klein a glance. He continued raising his hands as he walked slowly to the door.

Under the revolver's aim, he twisted the handle and slowly opened the door.

When the door was half-opened, he suddenly lowered himself and rolled forward. The door was pulled by a strong wind and it closed with a slam.

"Uh…" Benson, who was on the top bunk, was stirred. He almost woke up in a daze.

At that moment, a leisurely and serene melody entered from outside. The heavy and comfortable voice started to sing.

"Oh, the threat of horror, the hope of crimson cries!

"One thing at least is certain—that this Life flies;

"One thing is certain, and the rest is Lies;

"The Flower that once has bloomed forever dies [1]…"

The poem seemed to possess the power to calm and relax others. Benson, who was on the top bunk, and Melissa, who was in another room, again fell asleep amid their grogginess.

Klein's body and mind was also peaceful and quiet. He nearly yawned.

The way the thin man had darted off was so agile that he could not react in time.

Looking at the closed door, he smiled and muttered to himself. "You might not believe it, but pulling the trigger would not release a round."

The empty chamber to prevent misfiring!

Following that, Klein listened to the midnight poem as he patiently awaited for the battle outside to end.

Within a minute, the tranquil melody which resembled the reflection of moonlight on the surface of a lake stopped, and the dark night resumed its deep silence.

Klein silently spun the cylinder and moved the empty chamber away as he awaited for the outcome.

He uneasily waited for a full ten minutes. Just as he wondered if he should investigate, he heard Dunn Smith's staid and warm voice from the door.

"It's settled."

Phew. Klein exhaled. He held his revolver and took his key. Barefooted, he carefully approached the door before silently opening it to see the black windbreaker and the halved top hat. Dunn Smith was standing there with his deep and calm gray eyes.

He closed the door behind him and followed Dunn to the end of the corridor and stood amid the weak crimson moonlight.

"It took me some time to enter his dream," said Dunn calmly as he looked at the red moon outside the window.

"Do you know his background?" Klein felt a lot more relieved.

Dunn nodded and said, "An ancient organization known as the Secret Order. They were established in the Fourth Epoch and are related to the Solomon Empire and a number of fallen aristocrats of that period. Heh, the Antigonus family's diary came from them. Due to a member's negligence, it entered the antique market and was obtained by Welch. They had no choice but to send people in search of it."

Without waiting for Klein's question, he paused before continuing.

"We will capture the remaining members they have according to the clues. Well, it might not end too well. These fellows are as good at hiding as the rats in the sewers. But at the very least, they would believe that we have likely obtained the Antigonus family's notebook or that we have obtained a critical clue. In that case, as long as it's not something extremely crucial or important, they would abandon the operation. That is their philosophy on surviving."

“…What if the notebook is extremely crucial and important?" asked Klein worriedly.

Dunn smiled without an answer. Instead, he said, "We know very little of the Secret Order. Our success this time is all thanks to your sharp wits. This contribution is all yours. In light of the possibility of hidden dangers and how heightened perception would aid in finding the notebook, you have a chance at choosing."

"A chance at choosing?" Klein vaguely guessed something as his breathing subconsciously turned heavy.

Dunn wiped the smile from his face as he said in all seriousness, "Do you wish to become a Beyonder? You can only choose the starting Sequence of an incomplete Sequence.

"Of course, you can give up this chance and choose to accumulate the merit you have garnered. Then, all you have to do is wait till there's sufficient room for you to become a Sleepless, which is also the first, complete Sequence the Goddess has bestowed on the Nighthawks."

Indeed… Klein felt delighted and did not have any hesitant emotions. He took the initiative to ask, "Then from which of the Sequence 9s can I choose from?"

I have to have detailed information to decide whether to give up or accept, as well as choose which one!

Dunn turned around and seemed to be cloaked in the crimson veil that shone down on him. He looked into Klein's eyes and said slowly, "Apart from the Sleepless, the Church has three Sequence 9 potion formulas. One of them is Mystery Pryer, which is also the power Old Neil controls. Heh, Rozanne has likely mentioned this to you. She can never hold her tongue."

Klein smiled awkwardly, at a loss for an answer. Thankfully, Dunn did not mind it as he continued. "Our Mystery Pryer potion formula and the later Sequences that aren't directly chained were obtained from the Moses Ascetic Order. Back then, it was said that they had yet to fall to corruption. They persisted in their morals and precepts, determined in their pursuit of knowledge. They kept their secrets strictly confidential. Anyone that entered the order would be barred from speaking for five years after becoming a Mystery Pryer. They would learn to keep silent, so as to cultivate and enhance their focus. The maxim of the Moses Ascetic Order—do as you wish, but do no harm—began from them.

"Mystery Pryers have a comprehensive but rudimentary understanding and grasp of magic, witchcraft, astrology, and other mystical knowledge. They also know a fair number of magical rituals, but they can easily sense certain existences that hide among matter. Therefore, they have to be careful and show respect to their powers as a Beyonder.

"We lack a large portion of this Sequence, causing it to be an incomplete chain. For example, its Sequence 8. Of course, perhaps the Holy Cathedral has it."

This pretty much meets all my requirements… Klein nodded slightly, to the point of having the urge to choose.

Thankfully, he still remembered certain things.

"What about the other two?"

"The second type is named Corpse Collector. Quite a number of cultists who worship Death in the Southern Continent choose it. After consuming the potion, unintelligent dead spirits would mistake them as one of their kind and not attack them. They would gain resistance to the cold, decay, and corrosiveness of cadaveric auras. They will be able to directly see a portion of evil spirits and see the characteristics and weaknesses of undead creatures, as well as gain certain attribute enhancements. We have the Sequence 8 and Sequence 7 that follows it. Heh heh, you probably can guess Sequence 7—Spirit Medium! This was chosen by Daly back then," described Dun in detail.

Spirit Medium does appear mysterious and cool, but what I want most is to grasp knowledge of mysticism… Klein did not interject; all he did was listen quietly.

Dunn Smith looked sideways at the crimson moon and said, "We only have Sequence 9 of the third type. Whether the Holy Cathedral has it, I'm not sure. It's called Seer."

Seer? Klein's pupils constricted as he recalled the regret Emperor Roselle had left in his diary: He regretted not choosing Apprentice, Marauder, or Seer!

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CHAPTER 29
"JOBS" AND RENTALS ARE SERIOUS BUSINESS

Klein tried his best to remain his usual self as he asked with genuine interest, "What abilities do Seers have?"

"Your question is inaccurate; the question should be, 'what abilities does consuming the Seer potion give?'" Dunn Smith shook his head and chuckled. His gray pupils and face turned away from the moon as his features hid in the shadows. "There are many kinds of things involved—astromancy, cartomancy, spiritual pendulums, and scrying. Of course, it does not mean that consuming the potion will immediately allow you to grasp all of them. The potion only equips you with the qualifications and ability to learn it.

"As they lack direct means of fighting enemies, heh. You can probably imagine that setting up a magical ritual requires a lot of preparation. It's not suitable for combat. Therefore, in terms of knowledge of mysticism, a Seer will be more learned and professional than a Mystery Pryer."

It sounds like it matches my requirements as well… However, the lack of means to directly deal with enemies is quite a dilemma… Furthermore, the Church of the Evernight Goddess likely doesn't have the subsequent Sequences… The Holy Cathedral likely refers to the headquarters, the Cathedral of Serenity… The means available to low-Sequence Beyonders against their enemies might not be comparable to firearms… Klein fell into deep thought as he racked his brains. He kept going back and forth between Mystery Pryers and Seers. He no longer considered Corpse Collector.

Dunn Smith smiled when he saw this.

"You don't have to rush into a decision. Tell me your answer Monday morning. Regardless of your choice of Sequence or giving up this opportunity, none of us from the Nighthawks would have any other thoughts on the matter.

"Calm down and ask your heart."

With that said, he took off his hat and bowed slightly. He slowly walked past Klein and headed for the stairwell.

Klein did not say a word and did not immediately reply. He silently bowed and watched as Dunn left.

Although he was constantly hoping to become a Beyonder previously, he was thrown into a dilemma when the opportunity arose; the subsequent missing Sequences, Beyonders having the risk of losing control, the believability of Emperor Roselle's diaries, and the illusory murmurs that could corrupt people into madness all mixed together and formed a moat that obstructed his advancement.

He took a deep breath and slowly breathed out.

"No matter how bad it is, it can't be worse than making an eighteen-year-old high-school student decide on his future career…" Klein gave a self-deprecating chuckle. Gathering his scattered thoughts, his opened the door softly and laid back on the bed.

He laid there with his eyes open, silently looking at the bottom of the top bunk that was dyed with the faint crimson of the moon.

A drunkard staggered outside the window as a carriage sped down the empty streets. These noises did not break the serenity of the night but instead made it even darker and more distant.

Klein's emotions settled down as he recalled his past on Earth. He recalled how he liked exercising, his father who always spoke loudly, his mother who enjoyed busying herself despite having a chronic disease, his friends who grew up with him, going from playing sports like soccer and basketball to games and mahjong, as well as the person he made a failed confession to… These were like a silent river; it did not have many ripples or deep sentimental feelings, but it silently drowned his heart.

Perhaps one will only learn to cherish things after they have lost them. When the crimson receded and the sky turned golden-yellow from the flaming ball's illumination, Klein had made his choice.

…

He got out of bed and headed to the public bathroom to wash his face to wake himself up. Then, he took a one-soli note to Mrs. Wendy's to buy eight pounds of rye bread with nine pence, replenishing the staple food that had been consumed the previous night.

"The price of bread has begun stabilizing…" He commented after breakfast as Benson changed.

It was Sunday, so both he and Melissa finally had the chance to rest.

Klein, who was already in proper attire, was sitting on a chair and flipping through the outdated newspapers he brought back from yesterday. He said in surprise, "There's a house for rent here: North Borough's 3 Wendel Street, a bungalow with two floors. There are six bedrooms, three bathrooms, and two big balconies upstairs. Downstairs, there's a dining hall, a living room, a kitchen, two bathrooms, and two guest rooms, as well as an underground cellar… In front of the house are two acres of private land and there's a small garden behind. It can be rented for one, two, or three years, with a weekly rent of one pound six soli. Those interested can head to Champagne Street and look for Mr. Gusev."

"That's our goal for the future." Benson wore his black halved top hat as he smiled to say, "The rent for the places in newspapers is usually a little too expensive. The Tingen City Housing Improvement Company has options that do not pale in comparison to that for cheaper."

"Why are we not searching in the Tingen Housing Improvement Association for the Working Class?" Melissa walked out from her room holding an old, veiled hat. She had changed into a grayish-white long dress that had been mended several times.

She was silent and introverted, but that could not mask her youthfulness.

Benson laughed.

"Where did you hear of the Tingen Housing Improvement Association for the Working Class?" Jenny? Mrs. Rochelle? Or is it from your good friend Selena?"

Melissa looked to the side and whispered a reply.

"Mrs. Rochelle… While washing up last night, I happened to meet her. She asked me about Klein's interview and I told her roughly what happened. Then, she suggested I find the Tingen Housing Improvement Association for the Working Class."

Benson noticed Klein's puzzled expression and shook his head in amusement.

"They are targeted at the poor. Well, a precise description is that they are a housing association for the lower strata of society. They build and renovate houses that basically have communal bathrooms. They only provide three choices—a single, double or triple bedroom. Do you wish to continue living in such an environment?

"The Tingen City Housing Improvement Company share similar businesses as them, but they also provide choices for the lower-middle class. To be

honest, we are a little better than lower-middle class, but we still quite worse off than true middle-class families. It's not a matter of salary; it's just that we did not have the time to save up."

Klein came to a realization as he put away the newspaper. Picking up his top hat, he stood up.

"Then, let's set off."

"I remember that the Tingen City Housing Improvement Company is on Daffodil Street," Benson said as he opened the door. "They are like the Tingen Housing Improvement Association for the Working Class, known as Five Percent Charities. Do you know why?"

"I don't know." Klein raised his cane and walked to Melissa's side.

The girl with black hair that reached down her back nodded.

Benson headed out and said, "These kinds of housing improvement associations or companies were established as a result of Backlund. They are funded in three ways: One, by requesting donations from charitable foundations. Two, through funding proposals. They receive grants from the government's commission at a special rate of 4%. Third, through investments. By taking a portion of the rent received, they will give their investors 5% returns. That's why they are called Five Percent Charities."

The siblings went down the stairs and slowly walked toward Daffodil Street. They decided to confirm a place before talking to their present landlord, Mr. Franky. They did not want to be in a situation where they were forced to move when had no place to stay.

"I heard from Selena that there are housing improvement companies that are purely run as charities?" Melissa asked in thought.

Benson chuckled.

"There are, such as the Deweyville Trust which Sir Deweyville donated money to establish. He builds apartments targeted for the working class. He also provides dedicated estate management personnel while only charging rather low rent. However, the criteria for applying is very strict."

"It sounds like you aren't fond of the idea?" Klein acutely sensed it as he asked with a smile.

"No, I respect Sir Deweyville a lot, but I'm certain he does not know what true poverty is. Staying in his apartment is like a priest giving hope. It's not very pragmatic. For instance, tenants have to receive the main vaccines and they have to take turns cleaning the bathroom. They are unable to sublease their apartments or use it for commercial activities. They aren't allowed to throw their rubbish wantonly and children are prevented from playing in the corridors. Goddess, does he wish to make everyone ladies and gentlemen?" Benson answered in his usual tone.

Klein creased his brows in doubt.

"Doesn't sound problematic. Those are all very reasonable criteria."

"Yeah." Melissa nodded in agreement.

Benson cocked his head and looked at them before chuckling.

"Perhaps I have protected the both of you too well that you have not seen actual poverty. Do you think they would have the money for the main vaccines? The line for free charitable organization sets them back three months.

"Do you think their work is stable and not temporary? If they cannot sublet parts of their apartment to receive some extra income, are they to move out when they lose their jobs? Besides, many ladies mend clothes or make match boxes at home to maintain their livelihood. Those are included as commercial activities. Are you going to chase them all out?

"Most of the poor use all their efforts to survive. Do you think they have the time to discipline their children and stop them from running along the corridors? Perhaps they can only be locked at home until they're old enough, then sending them to places that accept child labor when they are around seven or eight years old."

Ben did not use many adjectives to describe the matter; it caused Klein to shudder a little.

This was how people from low socioeconomic classes lived?

Beside him, Melissa fell into silence. It took a long while before she said in an ethereal tone,

"Jenny no longer wished for me to visit her after she moved to the Lower Street."

"Let's hope her father gets back on his feet after that injury and finds a stable job. However, I have seen too many alcoholics use alcohol to numb themselves…" Benson laughed with a somber tone.

Klein was at a loss for words. Melissa seemed to be the same. As such, the siblings walked silently down Daffodil Street and found Tingen City Housing Improvement Company.

The person who served them was a middle-aged man with an amiable smile. He did not wear a formal attire or a hat, but instead, wore a white shirt and black vest.

"You can call me Scarter. Might I know what kind of house you have in mind?" When he caught a glance at Klein's silver-inlaid cane, his smile widened.

Klein looked at Benson, who was better with words, and gestured for him to answer.

Benson directly answered, "A terrace house."

Scarter flipped through the files and documents in his hand before smiling.

"There are currently five that haven't been rented out. To be honest, we are geared more to serving customers—laborers and their children who have housing difficulties where six, eight, or even ten or twelve people squeeze into a house. There aren't many terrace houses. There's one at 2 Daffodil Street, one in the North Borough, one in the East Borough… The weekly rent goes from 12 to 16 soli. You can take a look at the detailed introductions here."

He handed over a document to Benson, Klein, and Melissa.

After reading through it, the siblings exchanged looks and pointed to the same spot on the piece of paper simultaneously.

"Let's take a look at 2 Daffodil Street first," said Benson. Klein and Melissa nodded in response.

This place was a district they were familiar with.

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CHAPTER 30
BRAND NEW BEGINNING

2, 4, and 6 Daffodil Street were terrace buildings with multifaceted hipped roofs. Their exteriors were painted grayish blue, and three chimneys stood erected.

The place obviously did not have lawns, gardens, or porches. The entrances directly faced the street.

Tingen City Housing Improvement Company's Scarter took out a bunch of keys and while opening the door, introduced, "Our terrace houses do not have foyers, so you enter directly into the living room. There's an oriel window facing Daffodil Street, so there's pretty good lighting…”

Klein, Benson, and Melissa were greeted by a fabric sofa bathing in the golden rays of the sun, and an area more spacious than their previous two-bedroom apartment.

"This living room can be used as a guest hall. To its right is the dining room and on the left is a fireplace that will keep you warm in winter." Scarter pointed around with great familiarity.

Klein looked around and confirmed that it was a crude, open-style concept. The dining room and the living room were not separated by any partitions, but they were also far from the oriel window, making those spots rather dim.

There was a rectangular red wooden table surrounded by six hardwood chairs with soft cushions. The fireplace on the left wall looked exactly like the ones in foreign movies and TV series that Klein used to watch.

"Behind the dining area is the kitchen, but we do not provide any appliances. Opposite to the living room is a small guest room and a bathroom…" Scarter walked around and described the remaining layout of the house.

The bathroom was separated into two parts. The outer area was where one would wash their face and brush their teeth, while the inner area was the toilet. There was an accordion door that separated them. The guest room was described to be small, but it was as big as the room that Melissa currently stayed in. She was stunned at the sight.

After looking around the first floor, Scarter brought the three siblings to the stairway next to the bathroom.

"Down below is the underground cellar. It is quite stuffy downstairs, so you must remember to let some fresh air in first before entering."

Benson nodded casually and followed Scarter to the second floor.

"On my left, there's a bathroom. On the same side, there are an additional two bedrooms. It's the same layout on my right, but the washroom on this side is next to the balcony."

As he spoke, Scarter opened the bathroom door and stood sideways so that he would not obstruct Klein, Benson, and Melissa from looking in.

The bathroom had an extra bathtub. Like the other bathroom, there was an accordion door next to the toilet. Although it was a little dusty, it wasn't dirty, smelly, or cramped.

Melissa looked in a daze until Scarter walked to the bedroom next to it. Only then did she stop looking and follow the rest slowly.

She took another few steps before looking back.

Klein, who was experienced in life, was delighted and excited as well. Even though their landlord often supervised their cleaning up of the bathroom, it still was not clean enough. It was often nauseating, let alone the fact that they would easily encounter a line when they needed to relieve their urgencies.

The other bathroom was similar. One of the four bedrooms was slightly bigger and was furnished with a bookcase. The rest were about the same size as each other and had a bed, table, and wardrobe.

"The balcony is very tiny, so you won't be able to dry too many clothes in the sun at a time." Scarter stood at the end of the corridor and pointed to a spot with a door and lock. "There is a complete underground drainage, gas piping, meter, and other facilities. It is very suitable for you gentlemen and a lady like yourselves. It only requires thirteen soli of rent and five pence for use of the furniture weekly. In addition, there is a deposit that amounts to four weeks of rent."

Without waiting for Benson to say a word, Klein looked around and asked curiously, "Roughly how much would it cost to buy the house?"

As a transmigrator from the Foodaholic Empire, the desire to buy property still existed within him.

Upon hearing that question, Benson and Melissa were shocked. They looked at Klein as though they were seeing a monster. Scarter replied calmly and firmly, "Buy? No, we do not sell property. We only provide rental properties."

"I'm just trying to have a general sense of the prices." Klein explained awkwardly.

Scarter hesitated for a few seconds before saying, "Last month, the owner of 11 Daffodil Street sold a limited-period land deed with a similar property sitting atop the land. 300 pounds for fifteen years. It is much cheaper than renting directly but not everyone can fork out such a large sum of money. If

one would like to buy it over completely, the owner's posted price 850 pounds."

850 pounds? Klein quickly made the mental calculations.

My weekly pay is three pounds, Benson eans one pound and ten soli… Rent is thirteen soli and if we eat well every day, we would spend nearly two pounds a week. On top of that, there are expenses such as clothes, transportation, social expenditures, so on and so forth. We can only save less than twenty soli a week. One year adds up to about 35 pounds. 850 pounds would require more than twenty years. Even if it we bought the land for a limited period of time for 300 pounds, it would take us at least eight or nine years… That doesn't include getting married, living independently, raising children, traveling, and so on…

In a world without individual housing loans, most people are likely to opt for rental…

Realizing this, he stepped back and stole a glance at Benson. He beckoned him to talk to Scarter about the rent.

As for Melissa's intentions, they were obvious from her bright eyes!

At that moment, Klein suddenly thought of letting Benson loose.

Benson tapped his plain cane and looked around before he said, "We should take a look at other houses. The dining area's lighting isn't good, and the balcony is very small. Look, only that bedroom has a fireplace, and the furniture is too old. If we move in, we have to at least change half of these…"

He pointed out faults in a hurried tone, spending ten minutes to persuade Scarter to lower the rent to twelve soli and the furniture usage fee to three pence, while rounding up the deposit to two pounds.

Without further ado, the siblings returned with Scarter to the Tingen City Housing Improvement Company and signed two copies of the contract. They then headed over to the Notary Office of Tingen City to notarize the contract.

After paying the deposit and first week's rent, Klein and Benson's remaining money added up to nine pounds, two soli, and eight pence.

Standing before the door of 2 Daffodil Street, they each held a bunch of copper keys. They were momentarily unable to look away; their emotions churning within them.

"It feels like a dream…" After a while, Melissa lifted her head to look at the future "Moretti Residence," and she spoke with a low yet unsteady voice.

Benson let out a breath and smiled.

"Then don't wake up."

Klein wasn't as emotional as they were. He nodded and said, "We need to change the locks of the main door and balcony door as soon as possible."

"There's no hurry. The reputation of Tingen City Housing Improvement Company is very good. The rest of the money is for your formal suit. However, before that, we need to pay Mr. Franky a visit." Benson pointed in the direction of the apartment.

…

The siblings made do with rye bread at home before heading for a terrace apartment on Iron Cross Street. When they knocked on their landlord's door, Mr. Franky declared imposingly while his short frame perched on a sofa, "You know my rules. No one is allowed to be behind their rent!"

Benson leaned forward and smiled.

"Mr. Franky, we are here to give up our lease."

That straightforward? Would negotiating this way work? Standing beside Benson, Klein was shocked when he heard him.

On the way here, Benson had said that his bottomline was a compensation of twelve soli.

"Give up your lease? No! We have a contract, and there's still half a year left!" Franky glared at Benson as he flailed his arms.

Benson looked at him seriously and waited for a moment before saying calmly, "Mr. Franky, you should understand that you could have made much more money."

"Make much more?" Franky asked with interest, touching his skinny face.

Benson sat up straight and explained with a smile, "The two-bedroom unit was rented to the three of us for five soli and six pence. But if you were to rent it to a family of five or six people, with two or three of them working and getting paid, I think they would be willing to pay more to stay there instead of staying at Lower Street where its ridden with crime. I think five soli ten pence or six soli would be a reasonable price."

Franky's eyes brightened up and his throat moved as Benson continued to say, "Besides, you are certainly aware that rental prices have been increasing in recent years. The longer we stay, the greater a loss you incur."

"But… I need time to look for a new tenant." Mr. Franky, who had inherited the apartment building, obviously liked the idea.

"I believe you can find one very quickly since you have the ability and resources to do so. Maybe two days, maybe three days… We will pay for the losses you incur during this time. How about the deposit of three soli that we have paid? It is very reasonable!" Benson immediately decided for Franky.

Franky nodded in satisfaction.

"Benson, you are such a conscientious and honest young man. Alright then, let's sign the termination of contract."

Klein was dumbfounded watching this happen. He completely understood how easy it was to 'convince' Mr. Franky.

That's way too easy…

With the problem of the previous contract resolved, the three siblings first helped Klein buy his formal wear and then got busy with moving house.

They didn't have anything heavy or bulky as bulkier items belonged to the landlord. Thus, Benson and Melissa rejected Klein's idea of hiring a carriage, and instead carried their things themselves. They went back and forth between Daffodil Street and Iron Cross Street.

The hot sun outside the window set in the west, and golden rays shone through the oriel window, scattering across the desk's surface. Klein looked at the rack that had books and notebooks arranged neatly before putting an ink bottle and a fountain pen on the table which he had wiped cleaned earlier.

It's finally over… He let out a breath of relief and heard his stomach growl. He loosened his rolled up sleeves as he walked towards the door.

He had a bed that belonged to him. The bedsheet and blanket were white, old but clean.

Klein twisted the doorknob and walked out of his bedroom. Just as he was preparing to say something, he saw both doors on the opposite side open simultaneously as Benson and Melissa came into his view.

Looking at the dust and dirt marks on their faces, Klein and Benson suddenly burst out into laughter, sounding abnormally cheerful.

Melissa bit her lips lightly but the laughter was contagious. She eventually let out a soft laugh.

…

The next morning.

Klein stood before a full-length mirror with no cracks, seriously smoothing out his collar and sleeves of his shirt.

The outfit included a white shirt, black tuxedo, silk top hat, black vest, a set of trousers, boots, and a bow tie. He felt the pinch of paying eight pounds in total.

However, the effect was great. Klein felt that his reflection in the mirror exhibited greater scholarly qualities and made him look more handsome.

Click!

He closed his pocket watch and put it into his inner pocket. He then took his cane and hid his revolver. He took the tracked public carriage and arrived at Zouteland Street.

The moment he entered the Blackthorn Security Company, he realized that he was so used to his previous lifestyle that he had forgotten to give Melissa extra money but allowed her to walk to school instead.

Shaking his head, he took note of it before stepping into Blackthorn Security Company. He saw the brown-haired girl, Rozanne, making coffee. A rich aroma permeated throughout the office.

"Good morning, Klein. The weather is great today," Rozanne greeted him with a smile. "To be frank, I have always been curious. In such weather, don't you men feel hot wearing those formal suits? I know for a fact that Tingen's summer isn't as hot as the South's, but it is still summer."

"It's the price of style," Klein replied humorously. "Good morning, Miss Rozanne. Where's the Captain?"

"Same old place." Rozanne pointed inside.

Klein nodded. He went through the partition and knocked on Dunn Smith's office door.

"Come in." Dunn's voice was deep and gentle as usual.

When he saw Klein, who looked quite different in a set of nice formal wear, he nodded and his gray eyes smiled.

"Have you decided?" he asked.

Klein took a deep breath and answered seriously, "Yes, I have made a decision."

Dunn slowly sat up straight. His expression became solemn but the deep recesses of his gray eyes remained the same.

"Tell me your answer."

Klein replied without hesitation, "Seer!"

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CHAPTER 31
POTION

Dunn Smith stared at Klein with his gray eyes for a full minute without a word.

Klein did not cower under the pressure of the silence and his gaze. He continued locking his eyes with Dunn.

"You must understand that once you consume the potion, there will be no room for regret." Finally, Dunn spoke again in a deep emotionless voice.

Klein grinned and said, "I know, but I respect the voice in me."

First, Sleepless does not meet my requirements. It was the same for Spectator which he heard from the Tarot Club based on description. He was unsure when he would come into contact with other Beyonder pathways. A slow remedy could not work for an urgent situation; therefore, there was no need for him to wait. By the same logic, Corpse Collector was eliminated as well, leaving the two choices—Mystery Pryer and Seer.

Under the premise that potions of the same Sequence were equally dangerous and him unable to obtain more information, as well as the fact that both Mystery Pryer and Seer met his requirements, then regardless of whether Emperor Roselle was making a passing remark or if he really regretted not choosing Apprentice, Marauder, and Seer, it was enough to tip the balance in his heart.

Furthermore, he could tell from the diary that as long as he figured out the true essence of digestion and acting, he would be able to avoid the negative effects the potion would bring to a significant extent. As for the murmurings

and illusory enticements that could drive people to corruption and madness, he had already encountered that even without being a Beyonder!

"Alright." Dunn stood up and picked up his halved top hat. As he put it on, he said, "Follow me down."

Klein nodded and gave a gentleman's bow in gratitude.

Tap. Tap. Tap. Both of them ventured down, their footsteps echoing through the silent and vast stairwell and passageway.

Klein suddenly felt gripped by anxiety as he tried to find a topic of conversation.

"Captain, you mentioned that taking the potion would not directly give me the corresponding knowledge on mysticism, that I'll only have the qualifications to learn it. Then, where does the basic knowledge of mysticism come from? Did our predecessors risk their life for it or obtain it via other means?"

Every time he went underground, he would find the air especially fresh. Clearly, the ventilation was excellent. However, the occasional gust of wind made one shiver.

Dunn glanced at him, the darkness in his gray eyes appearing abnormally deep.

He answered calmly, "One of them is as you said, experimentation, summarization, and enhancement. Second, being bestowed by the gods. Third, heh. The dangerous murmurs that others can't hear do not only growl and roar senselessly. At times, they will describe some matters regarding mysticism. But according to what I know, people who truly listen to the murmurs on a long-term basis have gone mad without exception. Or they would fall to corruption and become monsters. Of course, we must thank them. The notebooks they've left behind are precious treasures in the field of mysticism."

Human lab rats? The underground passage's cold humidity made Klein shudder suddenly.

Then, would my luck enhancement ritual which turned into "Social Network Magic" eventually lead to similar effects due to the crazy and horrible murmurs?

At the intersection, Dunn did not proceed toward Chanis Gate, nor did he turn to the weapons, materials and archives. Instead, he took Klein to the left and approached Saint Selena Cathedral.

Midway, he stopped. It was unclear what he touched to open a secret door.

"This is our Nighthawk team's alchemy room. I will get Old Neil to retrieve the Seer potion formula and the corresponding materials from inside Chanis Gate. Heh, you have pretty good luck. The Goddess has blessed you with her favor. We should still have the materials needed for two Seer potions. If not, you would have to wait a long while." Dunn pointed at the room behind the door. "Wait in here. Later, watch Old Neil concoct the potion. It's the most basic part of mysticism studies. Oh, do not randomly touch things in there. They are either very dangerous, expensive, or both."

With that said, Dunn added like before.

"Oh right, I forgot something again. Your becoming a Beyonder is a result of you having to face danger and the need to find the notebook. The meritorious deed was only a part of it; therefore, you will not be a member of our team for the time being. You will still be a civilian staff member with a corresponding salary. You will still do what I instructed you to do previously. One additional thing is to learn more about mysticism with Old Neil. You can arrange the time with him."

"Alright." Other than feeling a little disgruntled by the lack of a pay rise, Klein was in full agreement with the rest.

According to Dunn, there was still the process of learning and grasping one's newfound powers after consuming the potion. If he were to become a formal member immediately and participate in paranormal missions, his death was certain.

Dunn turned around and walked two steps towards the intersection when he suddenly turned back.

"Another thing."

I knew it… Klein was already used to the "style" of his Captain.

"We got something out of the Secret Order's actions," said Dunn with his usual expression. "It's unlikely they will provoke you in the near future, but don't be careless. It has to do with them being temporarily unable to confirm whether the Antigonus family's notebook is important to them. From what we discovered, they have preserved some of the ancient customs and we can confirm that they are related to the Solomon Empire and the corrupted nobles of that period."

"Got it. Thanks, Captain," said Klein as he exhaled.

This was also one of the reasons why he did not wish to wait, grasping the chance of becoming a Beyonder in such a hurry!

As he watched Dunn leave and confirmed that he would not turn his head to say more, Klein slowly walked into the alchemy room.

The room had long tables. There were test tubes, pipettes, scales and crucibles. It resembled a chemistry laboratory from his previous life. It was just more spartan and ancient.

Other than that, there was a huge cauldron, a dark wood ladle, a translucent crystal ball, and other items. The Dark Sacred Emblem and other strange emblems were visible everywhere. They gave the room a tint of mystery.

Klein looked around with interest, but he was not stupid enough to touch the things.

After a while, he heard footsteps. Old Neil carried a tiny silver chest with complicated patterns. He was still wearing his unique classic black robe that seem anachronistic, matched with a felt hat with a rounded edge of the same color.

"Lad, I never expected you to choose Seer." Old Neil put down the chest and used his somewhat turbid red eyes size up Klein. "Your personality is just like mine when I was young. You just don't want to follow the masses. Not bad. Light these few gas lamps and close the door."

"Alright." Klein tried hard not to tremble as he lit each gas lamp in the alchemy room. He made dim light rule over the place once again.

Tak! Tak! Tak! The secret door was closed. He turned back to see the white-haired and deep-wrinkled Old Neil using a bunch of strange tied tree branches to scrub the black cauldron.

"The concoction of a Sequence potion is extremely simple, at least for Sequence 7 and below. There's no need for a special flame or any additional ritual, much less an incantation. There's no need for one to participate in it spiritually. All one needs to do is go according to the formula's steps, add the precise amounts, and mix it. That will be all." Old Neil's wrinkles seemed to bloom from his smile.

"For real?" Klein questioned in surprise.

This sounds as simple as my luck enhancement ritual…

Man, it's quite frightening when you come to think of it…

"Perhaps it's a gift of the gods. Praise the Lady." Old Neil drew a haphazard circle over his chest.

Following that, he opened the silver chest and pulled out goatskin parchment that exuded antiquity.

The yellowish-brown goatskin unfurled inch by inch, revealing words on it. Klein looked from a distance and realized it was in Hermes, a language he was very familiar with.

It was written in ink that resembled blood, seeming to still having its fluidity intact. But other than that, it did not seem extraordinary in any way.

"Seer: 100 milliliters of pure water, 13 drops of night vanilla liquids, 7 gold mint leaves…" Klein silently recited the formula's content, but the rest of it was blocked by Old Neil's wrist, preventing him from reading it.

"Pure water is water that is repeatedly distilled. Thankfully, I made some previously, so there's no need to waste time on it." While Old Neil gave the introduction, he took a large sealed glass bottle from the table with great familiarity.

He took off the stopper and poured about 100 milliliters of pure water into the cauldron without much thought.

Klein did not dare ask, afraid he would affect Old Neil's concoction. After all, he was the one drinking the potion.

"13 drops of night vanilla juices. This can be extracted and stored as an essential oil ahead of time." Old Neil took out a tiny brown bottle from the silver chest and with a pipette and dripped 13 drops into the cauldron in a relaxed manner.

A faint but easing fragrance emanated, making Klein feel an abnormal sense of peace.

"7 gold mint leaves…" Old Neil picked up a silver patterned can and removed its lid. With his bare hands, he picked up a few leaves and

scattered it into the cauldron. He caught a whiff of a fresh and stimulating scent.

"4, 5, 6, 7. Perfect." Old Neil chuckled and looked at the potion formula on the goatskin. "3 drops of poison hemlock. This isn't something you should drink randomly. It can cause your entire body to numb to the point of death. In ancient times, it proved to be the best option for committing suicide."

It's not like I'm silly… Klein lampooned.

Old Neil changed pipettes and dripped the poison hemlock into the cauldron. The mixture caused a strange smell that freshened one's mind.

"9 grams of dragon blood grass powder." Old Neil took his time to reach his hand into the silver chest and pulled out a transparent test tube. There was some deep black powder inside.

He used a beaker and a scale to measure 9 grams of powder and poured it into the cauldron. He then stirred the mixture twice with the dark wood ladle. The laidback process to making the concoction made Klein a little worried.

"In fact, the materials from before were just supplemental. The exact amount doesn't really affect the final outcome. Should I put a little bit more?" Old Neil made a joke. "The last two is what's crucial. The amount can be slightly lowered, but it cannot be too far from the requirement, or your 'enhancement' can fail. Oh, the quantity cannot be any more, even just by a bit. If so, you will have to be treated for mental problems. It's not impossible to die immediately."

Klein immediately tensed up as he saw Old Neil pull out a black glass bottle from the silver chest.

"Lavos Squid's blood, 10 milliliters. This kind of squid is considered an extraordinary biological species. It is clearly mutated. It is covered in mystery. Its blood will rapidly break down under sunlight and lose its

unique qualities. It has to be stored in opaque material." Old Neil's tone no longer sounded relaxed. He quickly and carefully retrieved 10 milliliters of blood with a test tube.

The blood was blue like the sky. From time to time, it produced illusory bubbles as though it was connected to the spiritual world.

"After pouring the blood inside the test tube, the remaining drops are ignored as a form of precaution," whispered Old Neil.

The moment the blue blood entered the cauldron and made contact with the liquid from before, it produced bubbling sounds. The surrounding light was dyed with a light blue tinge, making Klein feel a strange sense of distance but also familiarity.

It felt like the feeling of being in a mother's womb. It elevated a human's soul.

"The final item. Stellar Aqua crystal. 50 grams." Old Neil's voice sounded in Klein's ears, jolting him awake as he looked at the table.

In the old gentleman's hand was a piece of extremely pure crystal. Furthermore, the crystal appeared gelatinous, as though it was jelly from Earth. It lacked hardness.

Under the blue light's illumination, it reflected bits of light as it seemed to contain a resplendent void of stars within.

"This is excellent material for the creation of divination crystals… Just a little less in consideration of any mistakes." As Old Neil measured, he used a tiny patterned silver blade to extract the crystal.

"Pure water, night vanilla, gold mint leaves, poison hemlock juice, dragon blood grass, Lavos Squid blood, and Stellar Aqua crystal make up a Seer…" At that moment, Klein could not help but recall the formula.

With everything done, Old Neil poured in a few blocks of Stellar Aqua crystal into the cauldron.

Sizzle!

Illusory fog instantly spewed forth, turning the alchemy room into a blur.

Klein seemed to see a vast array of stars amid the fog and felt like he was being observed by an invisible existence.

A few seconds later, the fog dissipated. Old Neil used the dark wood ladle and scooped out some sticky dark-blue liquid. It had strange characteristics —gooey and inseparable. Not one bit was left in the black cauldron.

The dark-blue liquid was poured into an opaque cup before Old Neil pointed at it.

"It's done, your Seer potion."

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CHAPTER 32
SPIRIT VISION

Klein looked at dark-blue gelatinous liquid, finding it hard to describe it as either a block or cup of liquid. He swallowed his saliva and said in great difficulty, "Am I to drink it just like that?

"Is there no need for any other preparations? Like a ritual, an incantation, or a prayer?"

Old Neil acknowledged tersely before saying, "Preparation? There is. Get a cup of Intis Aurmir grape wine, suck on a Desi cigar, then whistle a relaxing tune, and dance a upbeat court dance. You can do a tap dance if you prefer that. Finally, play a round of Gwent cards…"

When he saw Klein's expression turn dumbfounded, Old Neil laughed and summarized what he had just said.

"If you feel nervous."

…You are quite humorous, aren't you…? The corners of Klein's mouth twitched as he resisted the urge to draw his gun.

He put his cane down and extended his right hand. As though he held something heavy, he raised the opaque cup. The smell of the potion was faint and seemingly ethereal.

"Lad, do not hesitate. The more you hesitate, the more nervous and afraid you will be. That will only affect the absorption that follows," said Old Neil with his back facing Klein. It was as though he had said it casually.

It was unknown when he arrived by the nearby water basin. He turned on the tap and washed his hands.

Klein nodded silently and took a deep breath. Just like he was back when he was a child, he pinched his nose and drank it like medicine. He moved the opaque cup to his mouth and tipped his head, drinking it down with a gulp.

A cool and smooth feeling quickly filled his oral cavity. It then flowed through his gullet and into his stomach.

The sticky, dark-blue liquid seemed to grow out thin and long tentacles, bringing stimulation and coldness to every cell in Klein's body.

He could not help but convulse as his vision rapidly went into a blur. All colors seemed to saturate. The reds were redder, the blues were bluer, and the blacks were blacker. The rich colors blended like an impressionist painting.

Klein had seen such a scene before. It was back when he was questioned by the Spirit Medium, Daly.

At that moment, his vision became a blur and although his mind felt light, it was clear. He felt like a castaway floating in the sea.

Slowly, his surroundings turned discernible. All the colors returned to their original as a grayish and blurry fog emanated.

Around him were forms he found difficult to describe. There were transparent objects that did not seem to exist. Deep down, there were lustrous brilliances of different colors which seemed to possess life or contain immense knowledge.

This is a little similar to what I saw during the luck enhancement ritual… As Klein instinctively looked down, he realized that 'he' was still standing in his original spot, body convulsing.

Suddenly, he came to a realization, causing his consciousness to sink abruptly and fuse with him.

Boom!

The fog quickly dissipated as the colors restored to normal. The bright, clear halo and the inexistent objects instantly vanished.

The scene in the alchemy room returned to normal, but Klein felt his head swell. He felt like it was being yanked apart. Whatever he saw had countless afterimages. His ears were overwhelmed by an ethereal murmur.

"Hornacis… Flegrea… Hornacis… Flegrea… Hornacis… Flegrea…”

Klein felt a stabbing pain at his forehead as he quickly had thoughts of causing destruction to vent the discomfort in him.

He frowned and hurriedly shook his head.

"Is your vision abnormal? Are you also hearing things you did not use to hear?" said Old Neil, at his side with a concealed smile.

"Yes, Mr. Neil, what should I do?" Klein tolerated the intense mania and asked.

Old Neil chuckled.

"This is the resulting seepage of the potion's energy. You lack the means to control it. Alright, do as I say. Think of an object in your mind, something common. Make it simple and easy."

Klein quickly focused as he envisaged his own halved top hat woven from black silk. He recalled the feeling when he touched it and its exact shape.

"Place all your focus on it. Keep repeating that while creating the outlines. Does it feel a little better?" Old Neil's voice penetrated into his mind like a

serene song.

Klein turned his focus bit by bit to the imagined top hat. He felt the murmurs subside into a whisper before they vanished. The afterimages he saw also stacked upon one another and no longer appeared a blur.

"Much better," said Klein after calming his mind of chaotic emotions and having exhaled.

He looked down at his body and discovered that nothing abnormal had happened.

He moved his limbs and with half-anticipation and half-doubt, asking, "I succeeded? I'm now considered a Seer?"

Old Neil pulled out a mirror-like mercury plate and shoved it in front of him.

"Look at your eyes."

Klein focused his gaze and saw that he was wearing a black top hat. His outline stood out and his facial features looked normal. Apart from having his face covered in sweat, he did not seem different in any way.

He followed Old Neil's instruction and carefully looked at his eyes. Only then did he discover that his brown eyes had deepened quite significantly. It was so much deepened that it was like the night—one in complete darkness. It felt so deep that it could absorb the souls of others.

Normally, dark brown pupils are easily recognized as black. Without looking very carefully, even Klein himself would not have noticed.

"This is a physical manifestation of the potion's powers. When you learn Cogitation and how to converge your power, your eyes will return to normal." Old Neil smiled as he reached out his right hand. "Congratulations, our new Beyonder, our Seer."

"Thank you." Klein reached out his hand and shook it. "Mr. Neil, when can I learn how to Cogitate?"

"You can learn it now. The initial steps of Cogitation is relatively simple. It's even more so for Beyonders," said Old Neil with a smile. "Just now, producing an object in your mind to divert your attention and turning the energy seepage inwards is actually the first step to Cogitation. Try doing it again."

Klein closed his eyes and once again, his mind depicted the halved top hat.

His concentration seemed to be more easily focused than before. Soon, random thoughts that surfaced would quickly vanish, leaving the hat's outline.

"Let your brain go somewhat blank. Exchange the object you imagined. Use something that does not exist in this world, an object you imagine completely out of thin air."

"You have to follow this rule. Only by doing so can you enter Cogitation, only then can you exceed the concept of 'I.' The limitless 'I' will be become one with the universe, giving you the ability to see and understand the truth. You will obtain knowledge only you yourself can understand. In the domain of mysticism studies, it's called a Mystic Experience," said Old Neil using a pacifying tone. "You just need to listen to the descriptions that I'll get to later. What's most important is to enter Cogitation."

Something that doesn't exist in this world. Imagine something completely out of thin air… Would things from Earth count? Klein attempted using an earthy-green intercontinental missile he saw on television. He replaced the halved top hat with this long and thick missile.

However, regardless of how he outlined it or imagined it, he ultimately only ended up focusing his attention.

It doesn't seem like it will work… Klein had no choice but to let his imagination run wild. He

outlined a sphere of light and then many similar objects, gathering them together.

The spheres of light stacked upon one another. It felt like an object of fantasy. Klein's thoughts gradually turned ethereal and afloat.

His body and mind calmed down. The objects that did not seem to exist, the fog with the bright clusters of light, and the complex colors appeared once again. They floated in the sky in close reach.

He extended his spirituality inch by inch as he looked down at them quietly. He sensed it and took it in.

"Very good. As expected of a Seer. You entered Cogitation very smoothly. You are just slightly worse than me back then. Slightly," said Old Neil with a chuckle. "In that case, I'll begin teaching you the most common, easiest to grasp, and most useful ability in the future in mysticism. Spirit Vision!"

He switched off the gas lamps one after another but opened the door to the alchemy room. It made the spot where Klein was dark, but not to the point of failing to make out silhouettes of objects.

"Alright. in your present state, raise your hands and place them in front of your eyes. Your index fingers need to face each other, but they are not to touch.

"Open your eyes and keep them open until you are accustomed to the darkness."

Klein completed each step according to Old Neil's description. He saw the silhouettes of his fingers and the surrounding objects.

"Actually, you should be lying down to let your body be entirely relaxed. But since the effect of your Cogitation is not bad, let's continue." Old Neil laughed. "Focus your gaze on a spot behind your hands. It has to be behind. Then, slowly move your fingers and maintain the same pose without touching them. Also, do not pull them out of your sight."

Klein calmly listened to it and cast his gaze at an empty spot behind his palms. He then slowly moved his index fingers within his vision.

Once, twice, thrice… Suddenly, Klein saw a fiery-red color in between his fingers.

"Eh…" He let out a sound.

"You see color? That's right. That's the initial step to Spirit Vision. The color you see is your aura," said Old Neil with a chuckle. "No rush. Do it a few more times. After stabilizing it, look elsewhere. I'll also take this opportunity to explain to you the different meanings of the different colors."

"Alright." Klein moved his fingers back and forth while having his vision trained on the fiery-red.

Old Neil thought for a moment before saying, "To put it simply, the mainstream way of mysticism is to split non-physical parts of a human into four levels. At its core is the Spirit Body, which is also everyone's basic spirituality. There is a school of thought that believes all biological creatures have spirituality and have a Spirit Body.

"I'm not sure about anything else, but to Mystery Pryers, the goal of Cogitation and the method to increase our strength is directed toward the Spirit Body.

"Outside the Spirit Body is the Astral Projection. It is the means for the Spirit Body to communicate with the spirit world and with stellar space. It's considered an external manifestation of the Spirit Body. Besides, it will be directly related to your personal ambition and your prevailing emotions…

The scenes you see after consuming the potion are scenes your Astral Projection sees when it wanders through the spirit world. That world does not obey the laws of the physical world. It involves exceeding the concept of 'I,' the limitless 'I', and the Universe's 'I.' The past, present, and future might be stacked upon one another and that is the source of divination.

"In the spirit world, what you see is just an imagery, a symbol. You have to interpret it to understand its actual meaning.

"Divination and many magic spells are cast through the Astral Projection.

"Do not mistake its relationship and differences with a Spirit Body."

One is just a body and the other is for form… Klein continued looking at the aura in between his fingertips and made the simple conclusion.

"Further out will be the Body of Heart and Mind. From this point forth, it will combine with the physical body… It involves your brain and is an overall manifestation of your inferential abilities, your analytical abilities, your observational abilities, and identification abilities. Some potions will mainly raise this. Quite a number of magic spells target it as well."

Old Neil explained in relatively great detail, "The outermost layer is the Ether Body. It is a manifestation of your vital energies and physical form."

"The aura color you see is an external phenomenon of your Ether Body. In other words, apart from the spiritual bodies, ghosts, and specters you can see directly with Spirit Vision, it might also include certain existences that should not be seen. You can also see the Ether Bodies of others or their auras. From their thickness, brightness, and color, you can determine their health and emotional state.

"When your Spirit Vision improves and you grasp more mysticism knowledge, you will be able to discover even more details. You can even determine the lifespan of others.

"By the way, the emotional state I mentioned would also manifest itself because of your Astral Projection. When you go higher in Sequence, your Spirit Vision will reach a relatively high stage. You can even be able to see someone else's Astral Projection. That way, you will learn even more things. This is a level only Seers and Mystery Pryers can attain.

"Some fellows even claim that the strongest form of Spirit Vision allows one to see anything in any place, including the past and future. However, I'm skeptical about it."

It sounds quite powerful… Klein was almost turning eager.

Old Neil coughed and continued, "Let's return to the Ether Body and the colors of the auras. Your limbs and parts that are required in motion will appear red. Your head and brain's surface will appear as purple. Spots that excrete waste will appear orange. The digestion system will appear as yellow. The heart and other regulatory systems will appear green. Your throat and other parts of the nervous system will appear blue. An entirely balanced body will make a body be cloaked in white… That is a symbol of health.

"Once it turns dark or the thickness thins, the color will change. That indicates that the corresponding spot has turned problematic. It means it's in a state of exhaustion or illness.

"In addition, the inner layer of the Astral Projection represents prevailing emotions. Red means passion and excitement. Orange means warmth and satisfaction. Yellow means happiness and extroversion. Green means calm and peace. Blue means coldness and stillness that one is in thought. White means brightness, an eagerness to improve. Dark colors mean worry, sorrow, and silence. Purple means that spirituality is taking control of the lead, coldness and estrangement…"

Klein silently memorized the information and stabilized his initial Spirit Vision.

"Good, you can look at other objects." Old Neil did not speak further as he nodded.

Klein slowly turned his head and looked at Old Neil. Indeed, he saw different colors in different parts of his body. The aura was both thick and thin at different spots. The purple color at his head was brightest and his limbs' redness was relatively dark. The overall whiteness to his body was somewhat faded as well.

Indeed, he's getting on in age… Klein made a silent comment to himself.

Only with what he saw did he feel that he had become a Beyonder!

"I am now a Beyonder!"

He shifted his gaze and carefully sized up Old Neil when suddenly he saw a translucent pair of cold and ruthless eyes without any brows in the void behind him!

This nearly illusory eyes were staring at Old Neil intently, as well as him!

This… Klein shuddered as he gapped and said, "You have a pair of eyes behind you!"

Old Neil was taken aback before he forced a smile.

"Ignore them."

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CHAPTER 33
SWITCH

The moment Old Neil finished his sentence, the illusory pair of eyes that lurked in the darkness behind him vanished. Even in his Spirit Vision state, Klein was no longer able to identify traces of its existence.

"This is a characteristic of ritualistic magic," explained Old Neil with a chuckle.

Fascinating… Is Spirit Vision an enhanced version of Yin-Yang eyes? Klein felt like a child who had received a new toy. In excitement, he turned his gaze way and began observing every corner of the room. He wanted to see the differences of the alchemy room with and without the Spirit Vision.

The outlines of the objects in the dark such as the tables, test tubes, scales, cups, and cupboards did not look different from how it looked like without Spirit Vision. They did not emit any lights or colors.

Objects without lives do not have any spirituality? Klein mumbled to himself as he swept his gaze toward the silver chest.

Suddenly, he saw a vibrancy of colors. The colors were as blue as the sky, as resplendent as the stars, or as crimson red as burning flames!

"Materials from extraordinary beings still have some life in them, and uh… are still active? Even if the source is already dead?" Klein deliberated on his words as he sought Old Neil's help.

"A precise description is that they have remnant spiritualities. It is one of the crucial points of a successful potion concoction. It is also one the

reasons why a Beyonder will lose control. Dunn should have already informed you," explained Old Neil frankly.

He suddenly laughed, having recalled something.

"I remember that the formula of Corpse Collector requires a desiccated mature black-spotted frog. To consume that potion requires a lot of courage."

Klein imagined a little and found it disgusting. He did not echo Old Neil's words and turned his gaze to a dark area. However, there were no spiritual bodies or ghosts that he looked forward to seeing.

"Isn't it said that the world of spirits is everywhere?" he asked out of curiosity.

Old Neil chuckled tersely before saying, "Punk, repeat after me.

"This is the headquarters of a Nighthawk squad. This is the ground beneath the Church of the Evernight Goddess. There are many Beyonders in here!

"Do you think we will allow spirits and souls to wander around in here? Furthermore, the spiritual world and spirit are two different concepts."

Klein felt a little embarrassed as he turned his head, pretending to look at the faint light from the gas lamps at the entrance.

"I get it."

While speaking, the area between his brows began to spasm.

What's happening? Just as Klein turned around to ask, he suddenly saw a figure standing quietly by the door at the periphery of the light. It appeared human, though its aura's colors and the darkness blended perfectly, making it impossible to discern.

Hiss!

Klein felt a painful spasm at his glabella [1]. His vision turned chaotic as he focused his attention again, but there was no "formless" figure!

Strange… He turned around and asked.

"Mr. Neil, the spot in between my brows is a little painful from spasms."

"Haha, this is very common. You are a new Beyonder. Spirit Vision places a great burden on your Spirit Body. Furthermore, it drains you constantly. Physical effects can be glabella spasms, headaches, oversensitivity, and minor bouts of hallucinations. And while viewing things with Spirit Vision, it's very easy to feel uncomfortable as a result of the unfamiliar surroundings. It's also very easy to have your emotions affected by others. These are things that require you to pay attention. You can become accustomed to and eliminate them with repeated practice. In addition, use it sparingly and end it in a timely fashion," answered Old Neil with a smile.

Why does it feel like you are delighted by this… Klein hurriedly asked for advice, "Then, how do I exit from the state of having Spirit Vision?"

He had planned on mentioning the invisible figure he had seen, though when he heard of the minor bouts of hallucination among the symptoms, he struck that thought away.

From the glabella spasm and headache, he could completely guess Old Neil's answer!

"Like before, think of an item to divert your attention. It will bring you out of Cogitation. Close your eyes and control your spirituality and repeatedly tell it to end. When you open your eyes again, you will discover that your Spirit Vision has ended."

Old Neil described leisurely and when he was done, added, "Of course, that is the most trivial and clumsy method. We can repeatedly hint to ourselves in Cogitation from practice to affect our spirituality. That way, you will have a simple switch. For instance, tapping at your glabella twice lightly would allow you easily activate Spirit Vision. Another two taps will simply end it. As for how you set it up, it depends on your habits and preferences.

"Got it." Klein thought for a moment and planned to imitate Old Neil to use tapping his glabella twice as a switch for his Spirit Vision.

Tapping once was easily mistaken as an instinctive knock to his head and tapping thrice could be a waste of valuable time in dangerous situations. As for actions like snapping fingers, they were too attention-drawing.

He eased his focus and imagined the stacked spheres of light and re-entered a state of Cogitation.

Under Old Neil's guidance, after repeated hints and practice, he finally "set up" his "switch."

He clenched his fist slightly and used his index finger's joint to tap at his glabella twice. Immediately, there were glowing auras of differing thickness and colors appearing before his eyes.

After another two taps, everything returned to normal.

"I've finally grasped it…" he sighed with delight.

Only then did he realize how exhausted he was, feeling like he could fall asleep at any time. His mind hurt as though he had stayed up for three nights.

Old Neil said with a chuckle, "We are not Sleepless. Every practice and every time Spirit Vision is used excessively, you will need some sleep. You can now go back and have a good rest. In the afternoon, go to Iron Cross Street where Welch's place is and walk around. Try your best to find clues

about the Antigonus family's notebook as soon as possible. Tomorrow, I'll continue teaching you about mysticism. Of course, do not forget to read the historical documents."

"Alright." Klein was in full agreement with Old Neil's arrangements.

He picked up his cane and left the alchemy room. He watched the door close as Old Neil returned to the armory. Klein massaged his glabella and temples and with the help of his cane, sauntered up the stairwell.

At that moment, Dunn Smith came from behind him with the corners of his lips hooked. With a deep gaze, he said, "I heard from Old Neil that you are a very suitable candidate. Even without Cogitation, you were able to use Spirit Vision."

"Perhaps, it's a unique trait of being a Seer," replied Klein humbly.

He guessed that Dunn had been watching the armory for Old Neil.

Dunn slowed down and went ahead of Klein a little. After a few seconds of silence, he turned around and said, "You have to remember that curiosity killed the cat. It can also kill Beyonders. Do not attempt to probe the murmurings you should not be listening or see existences you should not see."

"Alright." Klein knew this was another reminder of how Beyonders lost control.

After entering Blackthorn Security Company, he greeted Rozanne who obviously did not know that he had become a Beyonder. He slowly walked out the door and reached the streets where he took a trackless carriage to Daffodil Street. He nearly fell asleep on his return journey.

It was still in the morning and the temperature was about twenty-six degree Celsius. Klein pulled out a copper key from his waistband and opened the door to his home.

There were still many items missing from his home. The living room and dining hall were still empty. Benson and Melissa had work or school, so they had both left early in the morning.

Klein did not have the capacity to bother with anything else. He closed the door and briskly went to the second floor and entered the bookshelf-equipped bedroom that belonged to him.

After taking off his tuxedo and hanging it on a clothing rack, he eagerly plunged into bed. The moment his head hit the pillow, he fell asleep.

Klein was awoken by bright sunlight. He turned his head and slowly opened his eyes to discover the burning sun outside.

"What time is it? Did I miss the Tarot Club in the afternoon?" He struggled to get up and walked to the clothing rack to take out his pocket watch from the pocket of the tuxedo's inner lining.

Not only had he forgotten about the matter, he had forgotten to close the door to his bedroom and pulled the curtains to the oriel window.

Pa!

Klein pulled out the pocket watch and immediately felt relieved when he opened it.

It was only slightly past noon. There was still a lot of time until the scheduled gathering at three in the afternoon.

It was Monday, the day he would have a gathering with The Hanged Man and Justice.

Klein went into thought as he tapped his glabella twice. The scene before him changed once again as he saw that his body had restored to a bright luster.

He tapped twice again and stopped his Spirit Vision. Relaxed, he went to the first floor and boiled a kettle of water. He placed some inferior-quality tea leaves and chewed on some rye bread dabbed in a little butter.

Afterwards, Klein flipped through historical materials and original Klein's diary. He began 'revising' and consolidating his knowledge.

…

At 2:57pm, Klein closed his book and capped his fountain pen before pulling the curtains.

Immediately following that, he locked the bedroom's door, making the room turn abnormally dark.

He tapped his glabella twice and activated Spirit Vision to survey his surroundings.

After confirming that there were no invisible spiritual bodies in his room, Klein stopped the Spirit Vision and took out his pocket watch to check the time.

Tick-tock. Tick-tock.

One minute before three, he opened up his pace and like before, walked four steps in a counter-clockwise manner in a squarish shape. He incanted in Chinese softly.

Only this time, he did not prepare any staple food.

Klein closed his eyes as he felt the back of his hands turn itchy. It felt like the four black docks forming a square was protruding and projecting something.

Hysterical shouts and alluring murmurs began resounding, but Klein realized that the headache was not as bad as the first time.

It was not that he was unaffected, but that he was doing his best to stop himself from listening.

As a Beyonder, he had to have more self-control in such an environment.

Soon, his body turned light as he floated up. He saw the grayish-white and blurry fog that emanated. Then, he saw dark red 'stars.' Two of them had a minuscule connection with him with an abnormal sense of familiarity.

Klein looked at his blurry self and muttered in confusion, "The Astral Projection that Old Neil mentioned?"

He remained calm for a few seconds and again transformed the opulent divine palace with the tall bronze table under the domed ceiling, as well as the twenty-two high-back chairs that corresponded to the different constellations.

Klein calmly walked to the Seat of Honor and made his body and face be immersed in thicker gray fog. He extended his right hand and tapped two familiar deep-red stars and created a miraculous connection.

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CHAPTER 34
ADVANCE PAYMENT

In an underground basement without any windows, the burly Alger Wilson sat by a long table with various apparatuses and goatskin parchments on it.

In front of him was a half-consumed candle. The dim, yellowish flame's flickering made the shadows of the objects and table move like a mirage.

Alger's hair was disheveled like seaweed with a deep blue color that resembled black. He wore a robe with lightning patterns embroidered on it. He clasped his hands with his thumbs facing each other while he focused on a bottle of black liquid to the left of the candle.

Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh!

Splash! Splash! Splash!

The sound of tempestuous winds or the crashing of the sea waves howled from inside the sealed bottle. And in spots where the black ink did not sink, a faint fog would swirl. It was as though it grew eyes and a mouth.

Alger cocked his head to glance at the clock hanging on the wall and watched the needle strike three.

He pressed down on his temple as his eyes turned dark. Fascinating colors surfaced from the various items on the table.

At that moment, he discovered a deep-red light appear like a tidal wave from nowhere, drowning him instantly!

…

Backlund, Empress Borough, Inside the Hall family's luxurious mansion.

After dismissing her dance teacher, Audrey locked the door and sat straight up in front of her dressing table.

The sun outside was bright and gorgeous. There was a light-brown notebook made of exquisite goat skin. It was flipped open to reveal that it was blank. To its right was a fountain pen with a golden tip and embedded rubies.

Audrey did a test and made sure that she could pick up the fountain pen and write down the formula the moment she left the Gathering.

"I'm so looking forward to it…" She inhaled to repress her excited emotions as she looked at the mirror with puckered lips.

However, she did not see it reflect herself. Instead, a dark red and illusory beam burst out from her body!

…

Above the gray fog stood a majestic divine hall that looked like a giant's residence.

Dark red colors bloomed on both sides of the bronze table. They surged upwards like a fountain before pattering down. It 'carved' two blurry figures who sat in the same spots as before.

Audrey, with her soft blond hair and tall, slim build, instinctively looked towards the Seat of Honor. She saw the figure immersed in thick gray fog sitting back. One hand was flat, touching the table's side while the other hand was stroking his chin.

"Good afternoon, Mr. Fool~!" Audrey shouted with a cheery voice.

Following that, she turned her head and looked at the person opposite her. With the same tone, she said, "Good afternoon, Mr. Hanged Man~!"

This lady sure is unsophisticated. Is she so sure that I'm a good person? Why isn't there any fear from her? Is she a noble lady who has been protected well? Klein smiled and maintained his unfathomable image.

"Good afternoon, Miss Justice."

As he spoke, he lowered his head slightly and moved his left hand and tapped his glabella twice.

What he saw changed instantly. He saw Justice and The Hanged Man emit the colors of their aura!

And the surrounding gray fog and dark red stars remained the same. Nothing that seemingly did not exist or lustrous brilliances that possessed life was seen.

He shifted his gaze and saw that Justice's aura perfectly matched the colors Old Neil described. What was supposed to be red, purple, blue, or white were their respective colors. Furthermore, they maintained a lustrous brilliance and were of appropriate thickness. It was easy to tell that she was a vibrant young girl.

The colors of her emotions are red and yellow. That's joy, zeal, and excitement… Klein made a judgment before casting his attention towards The Hanged Man.

Like Justice, there was nothing special about the colors of The Hanged Man's aura. His emotions were blue mixed in with some orange.

Calm, thoughtful, careful, and a little pleased? With this being his first attempt, Klein made a conclusion without much confidence.

Just as he shifted his gaze away, he suddenly realized something strange.

The aura of the Hanged Man's innermost layer was nearly of the same color!

Klein focused his mind and took another careful look. He could faintly see that deep within The Hanged Man's Ether Body was a deep blue, akin to the sea. It felt like a tidal storm.

His Astral Projection? Or should I say the surface of his Astral Projection? From the looks of it, he's really a Beyonder, and one that's apparently stronger than Old Neil. Klein analyzed as his mind was filled with questions. "Not necessary. It might have to do with this being a unique environment. It's only because this is my home ground that I'm able to see these things that Old Neil did not manifest."

He turned his head toward Justice again and confirmed that it was a characteristic only Beyonders possessed.

At that moment, Alger also completed his greetings.

Audrey drew a light gasp as she asked in anticipation, "Mr. Hanged Man, did you receive the box of Ghost Shark blood?"

Alger took a look at Klein and saw him tapping his glabella as though he was considering other matters.

"Thank you very much. It perfectly met my expectations. I never expected you to send it to me so quickly. The Ghost Shark blood is not the typical extraordinary creature," said Alger frankly.

Audrey smiled humbly and said, "I'm very happy to see this outcome."

As she loved anything to do with mystery from a young age, she had befriended those in aristocratic circles with similar interests. They have exchanged information, books, and rare artifacts among each other. But before this, none of them had ever obtained any supernatural power to

become a real Beyonder. Instead, there were a few princes that hinted that they could gift her what she wanted if she became their princess consort.

However, she had obtained the Ghost Shark blood directly from her family's vault. After all, the inventory only states 'one big bottle,' without mentioning how many milliliters or how full it had to be, she believed that pouring a little bit of it would go unnoticed. Even if there was an accident and the matter was exposed, her parents were unlikely to pursue the matter.

Alger looked deeply at The Fool who was enveloped in fog before turning his head back with a smile.

"According to our agreement, I will tell you the formula to the potion, Spectator."

"Let me prepare myself. Alright, begin." Audrey inhaled as she focused her full attention.

"Low-Sequence potions are very easy to concoct. Just follow the order that I provide you. Do remember that there can be smaller quantities of the ingredients but not more. It would cause major problems. You should have heard about news of Beyonders losing control. I believe there's no need for me to repeat it?" Alger first mentioned things to take note of.

Audrey nodded gently and said, "I understand completely."

While she spoke, she turned her head to look at Mr. Fool. She wished to know if the mystery expert had anything to add; unfortunately, The Fool was sitting silently there like a statue.

Alger thought for a moment before saying, "Having smaller quantities does not mean it should deviate by too much… If you do not have an assistant, I suggest you spend some time familiarizing yourself with chemistry experiment."

"I have a family tutor for such matters," answered Audrey without feeling the burden.

After Alger mentioned the furthest extent of the deviation, he recited with great fluency, "Spectator. Sequence 9 potion. 80 milliliters of pure water. 5 drops of autumn crocus essence. 13 grams of cow teeth paeonol powder. 7 petals of elf flowers. A matured Manhal Fish's eyeball. Add 35 milliliters of goat-horned black fish blood.

"The final two items are the main ingredients. They are extraordinary creatures from the sea. You have to be careful."

"Alright." Audrey recalled and repeated, "80 milliliters of pure water. 5 drops of autumn crocus essence, 13 grams of cow teeth…"

"Paeonol powder," reminded Alger.

With his help, Audrey gradually and precisely memorized the formula's order. However, she appeared worried as she mumbled it again and again.

"Do you know about Cogitation?" When Alger saw Justice nod, he continued, "I do not know how much you know about Cogitation. Let me describe it once… After consuming the potion, quickly begin Cogitation to control your spirituality and energy… Make sure to practice every day to truly grasp the powers of the potion. Dig out the meaning it symbolizes and even more of its mysteries. That way, you can avoid the danger of losing control to the greatest extent. And the meaning of a potion mainly lies in its name, such as Spectator!"

Klein silently listened to the conversation and had no plans on interrupting. All he did was secretly memorize and study, but when he heard that, he suddenly had a thought.

Audrey listened to The Hanged Man's explanations attentively, and just as she was about to inquire about something more detailed, she suddenly heard the rapping sound on the table,

She and Alger turned their heads and looked at The Fool. They realized that the mysterious and mighty figure was tapping gently with his fingers. He said in a deep voice, "It's not about grasping them, but rather digesting them.

"It's not about discovery, but rather acting.

"The name of a potion is not only symbolic, it's also imagery. It is the key to digesting."

Audrey was dazed and confused from hearing that. She was not very clear on what Mr. Fool was trying to express.

She subconsciously eyed The Hanged Man for a reaction from the corner of her eyes. She was surprised to see him jolt and freeze. It was as though an ordinary person had heard a loud and sudden clap of thunder.

"Digesting, acting… Digesting, acting… Digesting, acting, key…" Alger repeated it again and again softly as though he had grasped a key concept or had succumbed to a strange curse.

After a while, he raised his head and said with a hoarse voice, "Thank you, Mr. Fool. Your hint is as valuable as my life. You have enlightened me greatly. Of course, I believe I have yet to fully understand or comprehend it."

Klein maintained his mysterious and unfathomable image by saying with a smile, "That was an advance payment."

In fact, he did not truly understand the exact meaning of what was said. He was just certain that Emperor Roselle was more powerful than the typical Beyonder and stronger than The Hanged Man."

Advance payment… Audrey looked at The Hanged Man's reaction and knew that the hint from before was precious. As she ruminated over it, she asked, "Mr. Fool, what do you wish for us to do?"

Opposite to her, Alger said with a nod, "What matter might you wish to entrust us with?"

Klein leaned back slightly as he glanced at the two of them before saying in a soft and pleasant voice, "Collect Roselle Gustav's secret diary on my behalf, even if it's just one page of it."

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CHAPTER 35
EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION

Roselle Gustav's secret diary?

Emperor Roselle?

Indeed, only such matters are worth the concern of a mighty figure like Mr. Fool… Audrey was first taken aback before she realized that she found it nothing surprising.

Rumor had it that Emperor Roselle had once seen the Blasphemy Slate. It was said that the secret cards he created hid the twenty-two paths of the divine. This was something every high-Sequence Beyonder would definitely pay attention to!

"Diary? That's a diary?" Alger frowned slightly as he keenly noticed this tidbit.

The item which Roselle Gustav had left behind had been described by Mr. Fool as a diary!

How did he know?

How did he determine it?

Could he know the way to decipher Roselle's cryptic text?

Faced with The Hanged Man's question and having obtained the desired effect, Klein leaned back into his chair and interlocked his hands. He answered in a relaxed manner, "Let us first view it as a diary for now."

He did not deny or confirm it.

Audrey had heard the children of other nobles mention the matter. However, she had never really learned much of it. With her curiosity piqued, she asked, "It's said that Emperor Roselle's, well, diary was written in a cryptic language or symbols he invented."

"Yes," answered Alger simply. "Some people believe that it is a unique set of symbols from mysticism. Others believe that it is a hieroglyph. But up to today, no one has found the correct way of deciphering it. At the very least, that's all I know."

With that said, he turned his head at Klein in a bid to get some confirmation or show his suspicions.

They are texts that have been passed down for generations, so are no longer in their original state. According to your line of thought, how can it be deciphered… Klein maintained his calm as he secretly gave a self-deprecating laugh.

As for how to handle the symbols of mysticism, he instantly thought of a ridiculous and funny scene.

Dressed in a black-pointed hat and long robe, an evil mage pulls up his sleeve to reveal a symbol tattooed on his arm. It was said that this was a symbol with mysterious power left behind by Emperor Roselle. They were written in two blue, large simplified Chinese characters:

"Retarded Joker!"

The corners of Klein's mouth curved up slowly as he found himself in a good mood.

After hearing The Hanged Man's description, Audrey said in a stumped manner, "We can't understand the symbols or the words… Then, how are

we to pass the information to you, Mr. Fool? Or are we to mail it somewhere?"

This is quite an important question… I do not have the means to accept an item secretly… Klein was in no hurry to answer. His repeatedly released his thumbs from his interlocked hands before tapping them back again.

Soon, he thought of a solution.

Since I can create a divine palace and table according to my wishes in here, would it be possible to project the content in the minds of others here?

I'll give it a try…

At that moment, Audrey and Alger saw Mr. Fool slowly sit up amid the thick grayish fog.

"Miss Justice, let us give it a try. Imagine a paragraph of text and give it the emotions of writing it with urgency. Yes, pick up the fountain pen beside you and write on the piece of paper."

Before Klein finished his sentence, Audrey saw a piece of yellowish-brown goatskin parchment and a dark red fountain pen in front of her.

She picked up the fountain pen both curiously and doubtfully. In accordance with the instructions, she imagined a poem Emperor Roselle once wrote:

"If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind [1] ?"

After scrutinizing the text, she picked up her fountain pen and imbued them with the desire of projecting them out.

Klein sensed the emotions and using the fountain pen as a medium, he guided her.

The moment Audrey landed her fountain pen, she saw a line appear on the goatskin parchment.

"If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?"

"Goddess, how fascinating!" Audrey exclaimed in astonishment while feeling rueful.

Following that, she looked at Klein with some fear.

"Mr. Fool, can you read what I'm thinking?"

"No, I'm only guiding you. I simplified the process of writing for you and made it become an imprint. If you did not wish to express it, nothing would appear." Klein placated her with a low tone.

"Is that so… Then we can only memorize the symbols or the way the cryptic text looks like. Then, we can present it directly as we wish?" Audrey heaved a sigh of relief as she asked in enlightenment.

"Yes." Klein answered.

"That's not a bad method. Miss Justice, do not doubt your memory. After becoming a Spectator, you will receive immense improvement in this aspect." Alger had watched the attempt from the side, fully coming to the realization that The Fool was more powerful and mysterious than he imagined.

As for his memory, he believed that the next advancement would improve it sufficiently.

Regarding this, Audrey nodded in delight.

"You have delighted me with this reminder. Mr. Hanged Man, do you have any other guidance on Spectators?"

With that said, she looked toward the Seat of Honor.

"Mr. Fool, I will work hard to complete your mission. I will do my best to gather more of Emperor Roselle's secret diary."

"I mentioned before that I'm a person who likes a fair and equal exchange. The advanced payment I gave is only equivalent to two pages of the diary for each person. If there are more, I will give additional in return," Klein said calmly, like he was an adult who did not take advantage of children.

As for where the additional payment could come from, it was naturally from the newly acquired Emperor Roselle diary pages. This formed a virtuous cycle.

"You are truly a generous gentleman." Alger fell silent for a few seconds before bowing slightly with his hand by his chest.

After the bow, he turned to Justice and said, "Let me emphasize once more. A Spectator will forever be a spectator.

"I know that many Spectators enjoy imagining themselves to be the protagonist or some other character. As a result, they invest a lot of feelings into it, to the point of crying, laughing, raging, and turning sorrowful because of the drama. However, that is not what a Spectator should do.

"While faced with the various dramas of society and figures who knowingly or unknowingly act the role of particular characters, you have to maintain the attitude of being an absolute bystander. Only then can you calmly and objectively observe them. You will discover their habits, their tics from lying, or their scent of nervousness. From those minute clues, you can grasp their true thoughts.

"Believe me, everyone is different because of their emotions. They will secrete different 'things' and different smells. However, only a real Spectator can sniff it out.

"Once you invest too many of your emotions, your observation will be influenced. Your sensitivity towards the emotions of others will deviate."

Audrey listened attentively as her eyes brightened gradually.

"It sounds, really, really interesting!"

Klein's heart stirred when he heard that.

The Spectator potion's requirement when summarized seemed to be "an absolutely objective and neutral spectator."

In a particular sense, it was equivalent to acting…

Acting?

Was this the 'acting' which Emperor Roselle was referring to?

Then, I will have to act as a Seer, and from there, digest the potion bit by bit?

Just as Klein was immersing himself in thought, Alger finished explaining the demands he knew of a Spectator. He sighed before saying, "It seems like there's nothing else?

"Perhaps we can have a casual chat. We can talk about things happening around us. Perhaps it is something very normal to you, but in the ears of others, it might be a very important clue."

"Sure." Klein snapped back and nodded slightly.

He was already planning to attempt to act as a Seer. After all, it did not seem like there were any negative effects from doing so.

"Then, shall we begin with you, Mr. Hanged Man?" Audrey agreed in excitement.

Alger thought for a moment before saying, "The infamous pirate who calls himself Lieutenant General Deweyville has begun his voyage to explore the eastern end of the Sonia Sea again."

"Oh? The owner of the Black Tulip?" returned Audrey with a question after some thought.

"Yes," Alger replied with a nod.

I don't even know who that is… Klein listened silently while he pondered over the news he planned on sharing. It had to be something that did not expose him while also allowing him to gain feedback.

Soon, he decided. He maintained his unfathomable image as The Fool and caressed the side of the bronze table with his fingers.

"According to what I know, the Secret Order has lost an Antigonus family notebook."

This news was not only known by the Nighthawks from Tingen City. The Secret Order as well as Beyonders with close ties with them similarly knew.

"An Antigonus family notebook?" Alger repeated before smiling with a shake of his head. "I'm really curious as to what reaction the Church of the Evernight Goddess will have if they learn of it."

Why would he mention the Church of the Evernight Goddess? Klein acutely sensed a problem, but it was not appropriate for him to ask.

That would shatter his image as the mysterious and profound Fool.

At that moment, Audrey asked out of curiosity, "Why are you curious? What sort of special reaction would the Goddess's church have?"

Alger smiled and said, "The Antigonus family was destroyed by the Church of the Evernight Goddess."

"I'm not really sure if it happened at the end of the Fourth Epoch or the early stages of the present epoch."

This… Klein's pupils constricted as a chill suddenly swept through him.

From the looks of it, the value the Nighthawks have placed on this Antigonus notebook far exceeds my imagination!

The reason why they nominated me as a Beyonder—having some contribution and to prevent danger to me are likely negligible reasons—is that they wish for me to raise my spiritual sensitivity to aid them in finding the notebook.

This was not kept from me by Captain. He had mentioned it, but I just didn't pay much attention to it…

After hearing The Hanged Man's explanation, Audrey said with deep interest, "I never imagined that such a thing would happen…

"Alright, my turn. Let me think of what I have to share."

She cocked her head and held her head up with her hand before chuckling.

"Yesterday, my etiquette teacher taught me how to faint, how to faint elegantly without any faux paus. It's a practical skill used at social events to avoid awkward situations or nasty guys… Heh heh. I was just organizing my thoughts. What I really wanted to say is that ever since the failure of the battle on Balam's eastern shore, the king, premier, and gentlemen are under immense stress. They eagerly wish to change."

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CHAPTER 36
A SIMPLE QUESTION

While Audrey recalled the conversation between her father and elder brother about the situation, she put in her own words, "They believe that the government's structure is too chaotic. Every election, if there is a change of the ruling party, there will be a change of personnel from top to bottom. It makes things a mess and lowers efficiency tremendously. Not only does it cause the battle loss, it also brings great inconvenience to the civilians."

Klein knew very well that as there was no example to reference, the Loen Kingdom had yet to evolve into a system that examined public servants. The political situation was still in its preliminary stages; therefore, after every election victory, many so-called positions would be awarded to members and supporters.

Hmm, Emperor Roselle not establishing such an institution in Intis does not match his personality… Could it be that he diverted his focus to other things later in life?

When the Hanged Man, Alger, heard that he interjected with a soft chuckle.

"They believe? Then their beliefs are a little slow. Perhaps they will only feel the itch a year after they get bitten by black mosquitoes."

Black mosquitoes were a type of creature that resided in the south of the Loen Kingdom. It was extremely venomous, and its venom made victims have the urge to rip apart their skin.

Audrey extended her palm and covered her mouth. Ignoring the Hanged Man's mockery, she expressed the core information of what she said,

"Unfortunately, they are temporarily unable to find a good solution to replace this system."

Klein listened carefully and felt that the topic was in the domain of his expertise. He smiled faintly and said, "This is a simple problem."

The Foodaholic Empire and the decadent countries that studied the Foodaholic Empire had very advanced experiences of success.

"Simple?" Audrey returned with a question in puzzlement.

Although her education did not include politics, she often heard from the discussions of her father, brother, and people around her. She had a sufficient understanding of similar matters.

Klein felt as though he had returned to the message boards of yesteryear. Composed, he said, "An examination, just like an entrance-examination for college. Hold an exam that is open to the public. It can be split into two rounds or three rounds. Use the most objective method to select the elite."

"But…" Audrey knew what sort of objection this would entail.

Before she had the chance to arrange her thoughts, Klein continued, "After which, use these elites to fill the positions of the Cabinet, the county government, the city government, and the various towns. Yes, the positions that are directly handling matters, such as the Secretary of the Cabinet.

"Different positions should be given different requirements. The second or third rounds can be tested based on locale and region. Professional matters should be left to the professionals.

"As for political positions such as ministers, governors or mayors, they will be left to the parties that win the election. That is a slice of the pie they deserve."

Alger, who lacked interest in such matters, unknowingly turned his head and listened carefully. Audrey frowned slightly as she fell into deep thought.

"There's no hurry in replacing everyone at once. The cabinet and various agencies in the civil service will be crippled if that happens. You can have an examination every year or every three years. They can be gradually replaced. Finally, in light of the kingdom's expansion and the salaried civil servants' resignations that will bring in vacancies, you can systematically allot spots." Klein fully expressed his talent as a keyboard politician. He then faced his palm outwards and said, "Such a design can bring the kingdom's insightful elites into the government. Regardless of the party in power or who the minister is, the civil service will allow the kingdom to maintain its basic and effective operations."

Of course, a side effect was the birth of the undying devil that was bureaucracy.

While considering the suggestion, Audrey asked doubtfully, "Are you implying that even if those ministers become curly-haired baboons, the effects would be insignificant?"

"No," Alger interjected suddenly. "I believe that baboons are a better choice than the present ministers."

He paused before adding, "After all, baboons only need to eat, sleep, and mate. They would not come up with foolish ideas and insist on brainless projects."

Mr. Hanged Man, it sounds you have quite a terrible superior… Klein sat at his seat of honor and shook his head in silent amusement.

Audrey ruminated over the suggestion Mr. Fool had offered and after a while, said in surprise, "It sounds like it actually might work…

"It's a very simple but effective solution!"

She looked at Klein and sincerely marveled, "Mr. Fool, you must be an elderly person with outstanding intelligence who is very experienced in life!"

…The corners of Klein's mouth twitched a little as he looked at the Hanged Man and Justice for a few silent seconds.

"Let us end today's gathering here."

If Miss Justice is able to influence her family and effect change on this matter, I can guide Benson ahead of time and give him a chance at becoming a civil servant.

On careful thought, Benson was indeed suitable for such a career.

However, it is unlikely Justice would take the initiative to do it. This is because the Hanged Man and I can easily find out which noble suggested it and basically guess her identity.

Of course, she could do it through a roundabout manner secretly.

"By your will." Audrey and Alger stood up together.

Klein leaned back slightly and severed the connection. He saw Justice and the Hanged Man's illusory and blurry figures instantly shatter and dissipate.

Above the gray fog, in the opulent palace where gods seemingly lived, he was the only one sitting silently at the head of the bronze table.

Klein did not plunge into the gray fog like the other time to leave. This was because his mind was still energetic enough after becoming a Beyonder.

The reason why he had ended the Tarot Club early was because he learned the true attitude the Nighthawks had towards the Antigonus notebook. He decided that he had to search for it seriously and not sleep all the way. Doing so would make Dunn Smith suspicious of his activities at home.

Furthermore, he had benefited quite a lot this time.

Klein sat on the high-back chair at the head of the bronze table. His arms leaned on the armrest as he crossed his fingers while he observed the boundless gray fog carefully. He found the place serene as though no one had stepped into it for ten million years.

When he established the connection to summon the Hanged Man and Justice, he acutely noticed something.

That was the fact that as a Beyonder himself, he had the ability to touch another dark red star!

"Does this mean I can summon one more?" Klein recalled the feeling and muttered in confirmation.

However, he did not have the urge to make an attempt since he did not know what the identity of the newcomer would be or what sort of attitude they would have. After all, not everyone was like Justice or the Hanged Man who had unique personalities that easily blended in and took whatever they needed. They even seemed willing to conceal matters. If he pulled someone like Dunn Smith, then the mysterious organization he had just established would instantly come under the watch of the church.

As an "evil" organization's boss, his future would be worrying.

Klein knew that the gray fog was special. He knew it was not something a Beyonder at Dunn Smith's Sequence could see through. But the problem was that since he had the powers of a Beyonder, he had to consider the existence of the gods.

Klein had chosen to carefully believe that the seven orthodox gods existed in reality. Of course, he was more tenable to the belief that these gods were just more powerful than high-Sequence Beyonders. Furthermore, they were under strict limitations. At the very least, ever since the Fifth Epoch, apart from a few oracles, they have not appeared again.

"Heh, forcefully pulling people here isn't a good thing. No one would wish to be pulled into mystery for some baffling reason… Let's wait and see how things go in the future…" Klein sighed and stood up.

He released his spirituality and sensed his body's existence. Then, he began imitating the heavy feeling of rapidly plunging down.

The scenes in front of him changed. The gray fog and dark red instantly departed him. Klein felt like he had torn through endless water membranes before ultimately seeing the real world, his room in darkness.

This time, he was fully awake and seriously took in the entire experience.

"Strange… There are some differences between the gray fog and the spirit world…" Klein moved his limbs and felt the existence of his body.

After he seriously thought through the experience, he shook his head, walked to the desk and pulled open the curtains.

Whoosh!

The curtains were drawn as sunlight poured in, illuminating the room.

As he looked at the street outside the oriel window and the pedestrians going back and forth, Klein took a deep breath and muttered silently, "It's time to go out and work.

"How should I act as a Seer?"

"It cannot be rushed… All I can do is use Spirit Vision now…"

…

Backlund, Empress Borough.

Audrey Hall looked at herself in the mirror. She saw her cheeks flushed red with excitement and her eyes, so bright that they would have daunted anyone from looking into them.

She did not examine any of this as she hurriedly recalled. She picked up the ruby-studded fountain pen and wrote the formula to the Spectator potion on the exquisite goatskin parchment.

"80 milliliters of pure water. 5 drops of autumn crocus essence, 13 grams of cow teeth paeonol powder. 7 petals of elf flowers. A matured Manhal Fish's eyeball. 35 milliliters of goat-horned black fish blood."

Phew… Audrey heaved a sigh of relief as she read it a few times to confirm that she had not made any mistakes.

She had the urge to dance again, but reminded herself to remain restrained.

After some thought, she began writing various chemical names around the potion's formula. She then faked the page into complicated and messy chemistry.

Yes, as long as one doesn't read it carefully, a person who flips through this randomly will not discover the details I have hidden in here… Excellent! Audrey praised herself and turned her mind towards the acquirement of the materials.

"I'll first search the few vaults we have. I'll then attempt to exchange for the missing parts with others…”

"If I still can't gather them all, I can only seek help from the Hanged Man or the Fool… What can I offer as payment?"

After some thought, Audrey closed the notebook and placed it on a tiny bookshelf. Following that, she briskly walked to the door and pulled it open.

A golden retriever was sitting obediently outside.

The corners of Audrey's mouth curled as she revealed a radiant smile.

"Susie, you completed the mission perfectly!"

"In the serialized stories on the newspapers, detectives would often have a capable assistant. I think there should be a huge dog supporting a real Spectator~"

…

In an underground basement lit only by a flickering candle, Alger Wilson raised his palm and looked at it carefully.

After a long while, he let out a sigh.

"It's still that miraculous. I was unable to figure out any specific details at all…”

Despite having made sufficient preparations, he failed to understand how the Fool had completed the summoning…

He moved his gaze down and looked at the goatskin parchment on the table in front of him.

At the title head of the yellowish-brown parchment, there was a Hermes sentence written in dark blue ink.

"7. Seafarer."

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CHAPTER 37
THE CLUB

Under the scorching afternoon sun, Klein left his house.

Since he had to walk all the way from Iron Cross Street to Welch's place, he wore a linen shirt instead of his formal attire of top hat and leather boots. He wore a matching brown coat, a round felt hat and a pair of old leather shoes. That way, he did not need to worry that the stench of his sweat would contaminate the rather expensive suit.

As he went down Daffodil Street, he strolled toward Iron Cross Street. When he passed by the square around the corner, he subconsciously took a glance.

The tents had already vanished. The circus troupe from before had left after finishing their performance.

Klein originally imagined the animal trainer who had helped him tell his fortune to be a hidden expert. He believed she had purposely appeared to guide him after discovering something unique about him and that she would meet him and provide hints for the future. However, none of that happened. She left for the next stop in the tour with the circus troupe.

How can there be so many cliched tropes… Klein shook his head while grimacing a smile. He turned toward Iron Cross Street.

Iron Cross Street was not characterized by just a single street. Like its name suggested, it was formed by two roads that crossed each other.

With the intersection at its core, it was split into Left Street, Right Street, Upper Street, and Lower Street. Klein, Benson, and Melissa previously lived on Lower Street.

However, the residents living at his former apartment and the surrounding area did not think of the area as Lower Street. Instead, they created the term Middle Street. By doing so, they made a clear difference between those staying there and the poor who lived two hundred meters down the road.

There, a bedroom was occupied by five or six people, and sometimes even up to ten.

Klein walked along the periphery of Left Street as he let his mind wander. He recalled the Antigonus family's notebook and how it was missing. He thought of its importance to the Nighthawks and thought of the deaths that resulted from it.

His heart slowly turned heavy as his face turned ashen.

At that moment, a familiar voice sounded.

"Lad."

Oh… Klein turned his head curiously and found himself by Smyrin Bakery's entrance. Mrs. Wendy with a head of gray hair was greeting him with a wave and a warm smile.

"You don't look… very happy?" Wendy asked genially.

Klein rubbed his face and said, "A little."

"Regardless of your worries, tomorrow will always come," said Mrs. Wendy with a smile. "Here, try out my newly created sweet iced tea. I'm not sure if it suits the palate of the locals."

"Locals? Aren't you one, Mrs. Smyrin?" Klein shook his head in amusement.

Trying out something means it's free, right?

Wendy Smyrin raised her chin a little and said, "You guessed right. I'm actually a Southerner. I came to Tingen with my husband, but that was more than forty years ago. Heh heh, back then, Benson was not born yet. Even your parents did not know each other.

"I have always been a little unaccustomed to the dietary preferences of Northerners and I'm always missing my hometown's food. I miss pork sausages, potato bread, roasted pancakes, vegetables fried in lard, and roasted meat with specialty sauces."

"Oh, and I also miss sweet iced tea…”

Klein suffused a smile when he heard that.

"Mrs. Smyrin, this sure is a topic that makes me hungry… But I feel a lot better. Thank you very much."

"Delicacies can always cure sorrow." Wendy handed him a cup of brownish-red liquid. "This is sweet iced tea I made according to my memories. Try it and tell me if it's nice."

After thanking her, Klein took a sip and found it resembling iced black tea from Earth. However, it was not as stimulating. The taste of tea was stronger and felt more refreshing. It instantly expelled the heat brought by the burning sun.

"It's excellent!" he marveled.

"That puts me at ease." Wendy smiled with squinted eyes as she watched him finish the cup of tea in a genial manner.

After chatting with Mrs. Smyrin about his moving, Klein returned to the street he was most familiar with.

There were far fewer street side hawkers in the afternoon. They gathered again after half past five. The ones that stayed behind looked drowsy and listless.

The moment he entered the area, Klein's heart suddenly felt overwhelmed by darkness. His heart felt heavy, down, and gloomy for an inexplicable reason.

What's happening? He sharply sensed something wrong about himself. He immediately stopped and observed his surroundings, but did not see anything strange.

After some thought, Klein raised his hand and tapped his glabella like he was thinking.

The extent of his vision immediately transformed. The auras of the hawkers and pedestrians all appeared.

Before Klein could observe the colors of their health, his attention was pulled away by the colors that represented gloominess.

He was unable to determine the exact thoughts of the observed, but the despondent, apathetic, and gloomy impression was deeply carved into his heart.

As he surveyed the area, he realized that even the sun could not disperse those dark colors.

It was a sense of gloom that tainted them from years of repression.

Upon seeing this, Klein instantly understood the reason.

Just as Old Neil said, activating his Spirit Vision easily pulled him into unfamiliar environments and made him feel discomfort. It was also easy for himself to be affected by the emotions of others.

A similar principle could be used on an ability like perception. This was an ability he obtained without additional practice after becoming a Seer. It was a passive sense that could not be declined. It allowed him to directly sense the existence of anything abnormal.

There was bound to be a level of interaction when perceiving things; therefore, in the Beyonder eyes of someone like a Spirit Medium, the intensity of everyone's perception is clear. It is like a fire in the night. Therefore, people with high perceptivity were naturally affected by the intense atmosphere of anything abnormal. It could only be repeatedly practiced to grasp, control, and adapt to such outcomes.

"Such a repressed color is probably formed over extended periods of time, right?" Klein sighed as he shook his head, feeling somewhat affected.

He tapped his glabella twice again and tried hard to converge his spirituality.

Tap. Tap. Tap. Klein walked toward the apartment and sensed for any abnormal existences or tiny connections while also searching for the Antigonus family's notebook which "he" had hidden.

The streets were the same as usual. There was filthy water and trash on the streets. It only cleared up when he reached the apartment's entrance.

Klein pushed open the half-closed door and circled the first floor in the darkness that the sunlight could not reach.

The wooden stairs creaked constantly as he went up them.

The second floor was as dim as always. Klein released his perception and looked into the darkness.

However, not only did he fail to discover any clues regarding his notebook, he even failed to see any invisible spiritual bodies.

"If it's so easy to encounter them, most ordinary people would not have already sensed the existence of extraordinary matters…" Klein sighed in reflection.

He had already understood that most "spirits" did not exist in the form of spiritual bodies, but in the form of spirituality. Only a Spirit Medium could effectively communicate with them.

After circling the third floor once, Klein left the apartment and retraced his memory's footsteps towards Welch's place.

He walked for a full hour but did not discover anything along the way.

Standing outside the gardened bungalow, Klein looked at the building through the locked iron gates and mumbled to himself, "There's no need for me to search Welch's place, right? Captain and Madam Daly must have done a carpet search of the place…

"Besides, I don't have the key. They can't expect me to climb the walls, right…

"I'll try another path tomorrow…

"I've walked so much today, but there are no step counter rankings…"

While lampooning, Klein returned to the nearby district. He planned on taking a public carriage to Blackthorn Security Company to retrieve his daily allocation of thirty bullets. He needed to make use of his time and practice.

A Seer's lack of quick and effective offensive means could only be made up with his revolver and cane!

The district around Welch's place was relatively clean. Shops with clean and bright windows lined the two sides of the street.

At the turn of the street, Klein was just about to seek out the carriage stop when his gaze swept past a few signboards on the second floor.

"Harrods Department Store."

"Military Veterans Mess."

"Divination Club."

…

Divination Club… Klein silently repeated the name and recalled that he had to 'act' as a Seer.

Yes, I should take a look… and seek out new ideas…

Amid his mixed thoughts, Klein went across the street and went to the second floor. He entered the main foyer to see a beautiful female attendant.

The woman with coiled brownish-yellow hair sized up Klein before saying with a smile, "Sir, do you wish to have your fortune told, or do you wish to join our club?"

"What are the conditions for entry?" asked Klein casually.

The woman explained with great familiarity, "Fill in your particulars and pay an annual membership fee. The first year is five pounds and subsequent years will be one pound a year. Don't worry, we are not like political or business clubs which allow entry through recommendations from formal members.

"Members can freely use the club's meeting room and various divination rooms and tools. They can enjoy the coffee and tea we provide and read the

newspapers and magazines we subscribe for free. They can buy lunch, dinner, and alcoholic beverages at cost price, as well as education materials and materials needed for divination.

"In addition, we invite at least one famous fortune-teller to lecture every month to answer any questions.

"Most importantly, you can find a bunch of friends with the same hobbies and have an exchange with them."

It sounds pretty good, but… I do not have the money… Klein gave a self-deprecating smile before asking, "Then what if I want my fortune told?"

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CHAPTER 38
NOVICE HOBBYIST

Upon hearing Klein's question, the beautiful lady with elegantly tied-up brownish-yellow hair appeared to lose her patience. However, she maintained her smile and said, "Our members are free to do divination for others in the club. They also have their prices and we take a very tiny cut as a fee. If you wish to have your fortune told, you can take a look at this album. It has introductions and rates of the members who are willing to do divination for others."

"However, it's Monday afternoon, so most of our members are busy at work. We only have five here today…"

As she introduced the club, she invited Klein to have a seat on the sofa beside a window in the reception hall. Then, she flipped through the album and pointed out the present club members.

"Hanass Vincent. Famous Tingen fortune-teller. The club's resident mentor. Good at various forms of divination. He charges four soli each time."

It's really expensive… That's enough to feed Benson, Melissa, and me to two sumptuous dinners… Klein clicked his tongue silently and did not reply.

When the woman saw this, she continued flipping the page and introducing one member after another.

"…And the final one, Glacis. A member who joined the club this year. He is skilled in tarot divination. He charges two pence each time.

"Sir, who do you plan on choosing?"

Klein did not stand on ceremony and answered, "Mr. Glacis."

"…" The female attendant fell silent for two seconds before saying, "Sir, I have to remind you that Mr. Glacis is only considered a novice."

"I understand. I will be responsible for my own decision." Klein nodded with a smile.

"…Then please follow me." The woman stood up and led Klein through a door beside the reception hall.

It was not a very long corridor and an open meeting room was situated at its end. There was enough sunlight and it was equipped with tables and chairs. There were newspapers, magazines, and paper cards. A faint coffee aroma drifted out.

About two rooms from the meeting room, the attendant gestured for Klein to stop. She sped up her pace and entered the room. She shouted gently, "Mr. Glacis, someone wishes for your divination."

"Me?" A voice filled with surprise and doubt immediately sounded. Following that, there was the sound of a chair moving.

"Yes, which divination room would you like to use?" replied the lady without any emotion.

"Topaz Room. I like topaz." Glacis appeared by the meeting room's door and looked curiously at Klein who was waiting not far away.

He was a man in his thirties; his skin was slightly dark and his pupils were a dark green shade. Under his light, yellow and soft hair, he was dressed in a white shirt and black vest. A monocle hung from his chest and he seemed to have a good disposition.

The attendant did not say anything further as she opened the door to the Topaz Room which was next to the meeting room.

The curtains inside were tightly shut, making it dim. It appeared that only by doing so would one gain revelations from the gods and spirits to obtain an accurate divination outcome.

"Hello there. I'm Glacis. I never expected you to choose me for your divination." Glacis gave a gentleman's bow, briskly stepped into the room, and sat behind a long table. "Frankly, I'm only attempting divination for others. I do not have much experience. For now, I'm not a good fortune-teller. You still have a chance for regret."

After Klein returned the bow, he entered and closed the door behind him.

By the light seeping through the curtains, he said with a smile, "You are a really honest man, but I'm someone who is very firm on his choices."

"Please have a seat." Glacis pointed at the seat in front of him and thought for a few seconds. "Divination is my hobby. Heh heh. In life, one often receives guidance from the divine, but the ordinary person is unable to accurately understand the meaning. This is the reason why divination exists and also why I joined this club. In this aspect, I still lack confidence. Let's make the divination that follows an exchange, a free exchange. How do you like my suggestion? I'll cover the fees the club requires. It's just a quarterpence."

Klein did not agree or shake his head. Instead, he smiled.

"From the looks of it, you have a pretty well-paying and decent job."

While he said so, he leaned his body forward slightly. He held his forehead with his right fist and tapped at it twice.

"But that does not enhance the accuracy of my divination," answered Glacis humorously. "Does your head hurt? Do you want to divine problems

regarding health?"

"A little. I wish to divine where an item is." Klein had already thought of an excuse as he slowly leaned back.

In his eyes, Glacis's aura clearly presented itself. The orange colors by his lungs were dark and sparse. They even influenced the brightness in other areas.

This is not a symptom of exhaustion… Klein nodded in an indiscernible manner.

"Are you searching for a lost item?" Glacis thought for a few seconds before saying, "Then let's do a simple determination."

He pushed the neatly stacked tarot cards on the black table toward Klein.

"Calm down. Think of that item and ask yourself 'can it still be found.' While doing so, shuffle and cut the deck."

"Alright." Klein actually did not remember what the ancient notebook looked like. All he could do was repeat the question to himself: *Can the Antigonus family's notebook still be found?*

While he repeated the thought, he skillfully shuffled and cut the deck.

Glacis picked the topmost card and pushed it in front of Klein. The card was facing down horizontally.

"Turn it clockwise until it sits vertical. Then flip it open. If the card is inverted, which means the picture on the card is facing away from you, it indicates that the item cannot be found. If the card is upright, then we can continue the divination and seek its actual location."

Klein followed his instructions and turned the horizontal card vertical.

He clasped the end of the tarot card and flipped it over.

It was an inverted card.

"What a pity." Glacis sighed.

Klein did not respond because his attention was focused on the tarot card in front of him.

The inverted card's picture was dressed in gorgeous clothes and splendid headdress—The Fool!

It's The Fool again? It can't be so coincidental, right… According to the Hanged Man and Old Neil, divination is the outcome of the communication of spirituality and the spirit world with a higher-dimensional "me." Tarot cards are only a convenient tool to read what the truth symbolizes. In theory, using any divination item doesn't matter as it doesn't affect the outcome.… Klein frowned as he thought for a moment.

"Can it be divined whether the item is already in the hands of others?"

"Of course. Follow the same procedure and do it again." Glacis nodded with rich interest.

Klein shuffled and cut the deck while thinking of his question.

He drew a card and placed it horizontally before turning it vertical clockwise. He finished all the preparations with a serious expression.

Taking a deep breath, Klein reached out his hand and flipped over the tarot card.

Please do not be The Fool again…

While praying, he suddenly relaxed because the card was that of The Star and it was inverted!

"From the looks of it, the item has not been taken by others yet," interpreted Glacis with a smile.

Klein nodded and raised his right hand. He tapped his glabella, looking as though he was deep in thought. Then, he took out two pennies with a dark copper luster from his pocket and pushed it towards Glacis.

"Didn't I say it was free?" Glacis said with a frown.

Klein laughed as he got up.

"This is the respect divination deserves."

"Alright, thank you for your generosity." Glacis stood up and reached out his hand.

After shaking his hand, Klein took two steps back and turned around. He walked to the door and twisted the doorknob.

Just as he was about to leave, he suddenly turned his head and made a terse sound.

"Mr. Glacis, I suggest that you see a doctor as soon as possible. Focus on your lungs."

"Why?" asked Glacis in surprise.

Are you cursing me because you aren't pleased with the divination results?

Klein thought for a moment before saying, "It's a symptom based on the color of your face. You, well… your glabella seems dark [1]."

"Glabella seems dark…" It was the first time Glacis was hearing such a description.

Klein did not explain further as he walked out the room with a smile. He closed the wooden door behind him.

"Is he an unlicensed doctor or a herbalist?" Glacis shook his head, amused. He then picked up his monocle for divination.

On careful look, he realized his glabella was indeed dark.

But this was a problem of the environment. In the darkness due to the closed curtains, not only was his glabella dark, his entire face was shrouded in darkness!

"It's not a very likable joke." Glacis muttered.

He worriedly divined his own health to make sure that everything was alright.

…

After leaving the Divination Club, Klein had an additional plan for the future.

It was to save as much money as possible to pay the annual fee to become a member of the club. After which, he could begin acting as a Seer.

As for why he did not choose to do it independently, it was because he temporarily lacked the resources and channels. He could not bring himself to stand on the streets as a hawker since he cared for his reputation.

A few minutes later, the public carriage arrived. He spent two pence and reached Zouteland Street which was not very far off.

He pushed open the door to Blackthorn Security Company but did not see the familiar brown-haired girl. He only saw the black-haired, green-eyed Leonard Mitchell with his poetic bearing behind the reception counter.

"Good afternoon. Where's Rozanne?" Klein asked after taking off his hat and bowing.

Leonard smiled and pointed at the partition.

"It's her shift tonight at the armory."

Without waiting for Klein to ask another question, Leonard said as though he was pondering over a matter, "Klein, I have a question that has always puzzled me."

"What is it?" Klein was puzzled.

Leonard stood up and smilingly said with a relaxed tone, "Why did Welch and Naya commit suicide on the spot while you returned home?"

"It likely has to do with how the unknown existence made me take the Antigonus family's notebook away to hide it," answered Klein with the official surmise.

Leonard paced around before turning to look straight into Klein's eyes.

"If your suicide was meant to silence you and wipe out any clues, why weren't you made to destroy the notebook there and then?"

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CHAPTER 39
INTERESTING TRICK

In fact, I do not know if the notebook is destroyed or hidden… but by using backward reasoning, if it is to be destroyed, it could have been done on the spot. There was no need for me to take it away to carry out the destruction…

Upon hearing Leonard's question, Klein instantly went into keyboard detective mode and said with a sigh, "Perhaps when Welch, Naya, and I made contact with the unknown existence, it enjoyed the sacrifice of life or wished for similar situations to continue. With the suicide definitely easily discoverable, I was made to take away the notebook to hide it so as to prepare for the existence's second round of entertainment. However, some mishap happened during the process and I failed to succeed in my suicide."

This was a reasoned guess Klein made from his consumption of novels, movies, and TV dramas which involved cult sacrifices.

As for the mishap that happened midway, he knew very well that it was due to the unexpected variable of him being a transmigrator.

"Quite a good explanation, but I believe there might be other possibilities. Welch's and Naya's suicide sacrifice might have made it possible for the unknown existence to descend on this world. Then, that notebook is a vessel or a breeding ground for evil. It made you take it away to hide it, worried that we would destroy it if we discovered its birth—before it became strong." Leonard Mitchell suggested another possibility.

Having said that, he stared into Klein's eyes and smiled slightly.

"Of course, perhaps the notebook has been destroyed. The goal is to hide its content, to conceal the vessel or the brooding of evil. That way, there is a sufficient reason for your failed suicide."

What does he mean? Is he suspecting me? Is he suspecting that the original Klein's body is a vessel or used for the brooding of evil? No, what he's being a vessel for is a transmigrator… Actually, "Brooding" isn't a correct term. Klein was taken aback. While he secretly criticized the idea, he weighed his words.

"I will not try to defend myself since I've lost memories from that period. Be it Captain or Madam Daly, they have already confirmed that I'm fine. Your joke isn't funny."

"I'm only considering a possibility. It does not eliminate the blow the unknown existence encountered when it descended which caused your suicide to fail. We believe that the Goddess will ultimately bless us." Leonard laughed as he changed the subject. "Did you discover anything in the afternoon?"

After the conversation and the previous encounters, Klein was very wary of Leonard. He answered in a composed manner, "No. I plan on trying a different route tomorrow afternoon."

He pointed to the partition and said, "I'll need to head to the armory to draw the bullets."

The Shooting Club opened to nine at night. After all, its availability increased only after many of its members got off work.

"May Goddess bless you." Leonard smiled as he gestured the sign of the crimson moon on his chest.

He watched Klein pass through the partition and listened to his footsteps down the stairs. Leonard's smile gradually vanished as a look of doubt appeared in his green eyes.

He whispered something with a displeased tone.

…

Down the stairs, Klein followed the gas lamp-illuminated corridor to the armory and archives.

The iron door was open and the brown-haired Rozanne was standing in front of the table. She was chatting with a top hat-wearing middle-aged man with a thick black beard.

"Good afternoon, no. Good evening. It's always night here. Klein, I heard from Old Neil that you have become a Beyonder? It's called Seer?" Rozanne turned her head and deluged him with her questions.

She did not hide her curiosity and concern.

Klein nodded with a smile.

"Good afternoon, Miss Rozanne. It's indeed always night here, but it makes one feel a sense of serenity. The description you gave wasn't accurate enough. It should be said that the Sequence potion I consumed has the name Seer."

"You still chose to become a Beyonder after all…" Rozanne said with a sigh as she fell into a deep thought.

Klein looked at the middle-aged man beside her and asked politely, "You are?"

Another Nighthawk member or one of the other two civilian staff I have not met?

Rozanne puckered her lips and said, "Bredt. Our colleague. He wishes to change slots with me to free up the night after tomorrow. He plans on going to the theater in the North Borough with his wife to watch The Prideful

One. It's to celebrate their fifteenth-year wedding anniversary. He's truly a romantic gentleman."

Bredt smiled as he extended his hand and said, "With Miss Rozanne around, there's nothing that requires repeating. Hello, Klein. I never expected you to become a Beyonder so quickly. As for me, heh, I might never have the courage."

"Perhaps it's as the saying goes, the ignorant knows no fear," Klein said in a self-deprecating manner as he extended his hand to shake Bredt's.

"Me not having courage is not something bad," said Bredt with a shake of his head. "A Beyonder once told me before his death to never probe the strange and dangerous matters. The less you know, the longer you live."

At that moment, Rozanne interjected, "Klein, there's no need to mind it. I heard from Old Neil that as a Seer, you are used as support. It's relatively safe as long as you do not attempt to communicate with unknown existences. Why are you dressed in such clothes? It's so unbecoming of a gentleman! What are you here for?"

"I'm here to draw my thirty bullets." Klein did not reply to Rozanne's first question.

He believed that the lady would quickly forget the matter.

"Alright." Rozanne pointed at the table and said, "Bredt, it's all yours. You should know where the keys and bullets are. Oh, Old Neil really is petty. He did not even leave his hand ground coffee behind. He promised me that I could drink my fill today…"

She prattled on as Klein received the bullets.

The duo left together and went their separate ways at Zouteland Street. One took a public carriage home while the other walked into the Shooting Club.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Klein repeated the process—gripping the gun, raising his arms, shooting, releasing the cylinder, ejecting the empty shells, and stuffing in rounds—again and again. He became familiar with the process and built it into his muscle memory.

Of course, he had a few breaks in between to review and correct the process.

After finishing his practice, Klein used the grounds to do various exercises like push-ups. He worked hard to train his body to improve his physique.

Once everything was over, he sat in an untracked carriage home. Only then he realized it was nearing seven and the sky was already dark.

Just as Klein was planning to head to the market or streets to buy the ingredients for dinner, the door opened. Melissa had returned with her stationery-filled bag.

Apart from that, she carried quite a lot of groceries.

“…I thought you and Benson would be home rather late. This morning, I took out 1 soli from the place you hide the money." Upon seeing her brother's questioning look, Melissa explained in her usual serious manner.

"Since you took the money, why didn't you take the public carriage to school?" Klein had been reminded of the matter from the morning.

Melissa said with a frown, "Why should I take a public carriage. It costs four pence to get to school. A return trip means eight pence. Counting Benson and you, we will be spending twenty-four pence on transportation daily. That's a whole soli! In a week, yes, without counting Sunday, that's still twelve soli. It's almost equal to our rent."

Stop, stop, stop! Don't flaunt your mathematical prowess.… Klein lowered his palm in an amused manner.

Melissa first stopped before adding, "It's pretty good walking to school. Our teacher said that everyone should exercise frequently. Besides, I can pick some damaged components on the way."

Klein chuckled and said, "Then let's do the math again. The public carriage costs twelve soli. The rent is twelve soli and three pence. It's a total of one pound, four soli and three pence. Using Benson's salary is enough to pay for it and there will be quite a bit of change left. Yes, he has received last week's salary… As for me, I can still earn one pound ten soli every week. Even if we eat meat every day while counting expenses like gas, charcoal, wood, and condiments, we would still have some left if we are frugal with lunch. We can even subscribe to the morning papers for just one penny."

"In two months, when I make up for the advanced payment, I can save money for both you and Benson. We can have new clothes."

"But! But we have to think of the possible accidents." Melissa stayed firm on her point.

Klein smiled at her and said, "Then, we can eat less meat. Don't you find spending fifty, no, a hundred minutes on the road a waste of time? You could use that time to read more and think over problems and improve your results.

"That way, Melissa, you will be graduate with excellent grades. You will be able to find a job with a pretty good salary. When that happens, what is there to worry about?"

"…”

He fully displayed his experience gained from debating with people on message boards and finally convinced Melissa. She agreed to take the public carriage to school.

"Phew, I've finally suckered her into doing it. No, how can I call it suckering. This is called convincing…" Klein lampooned before taking over the groceries that Melissa had bought. He said with a sigh, "Remember to buy beef or meat like mutton and chicken… Eat until you're full and enjoy yourself. Only then will you be equipped with a healthy body and a clever brain to match the demanding requirements needed for your studies."

Just mentioning it makes me salivate…

Melissa puckered her lips and after a few seconds of silence, said, "Alright."

…

The next morning, after ensuring that Melissa took a public carriage, Klein and Benson separated and went to their respective companies.

The moment Klein stepped into the door, he saw Old Neil and Rozanne chatting by the reception desk. The former was still in his classic black robe, without any concern for the gazes of others. The latter had changed into a casual cream-colored dress.

"Good morning, Mr. Neil, Miss Rozanne," greeted Klein as he took off his hat.

Old Neil gave him a mischievous look.

"Good morning, you did not hear anything you shouldn't have heard last night, right?"

"No, I slept very well." Klein was also quite puzzled over that.

He could only put it down to his inadequate perception…

"Haha, don't mind that. Actually, it's not that easily heard." Old Neil pointed to the partition and said, "Go to the armory. We will continue out mysticism

lessons this morning."

Klein nodded and followed Old Neil down the stairs and arrived at the armory to replace Bredt who had been on duty the entire night.

"What will we be learning today?" asked Klein curiously.

Old Neil dragged out his response and said, "The complicated and basic knowledge. But before that, let me teach you an interesting trick."

He pointed at the silver chain on his wrist. There was a pure moonstone hanging from the chain.

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CHAPTER 40
MYSTICISM CURRICULUM

"An interesting trick?"

Klein asked out of extreme curiosity.

Old Neil chuckled and said, "I'll complete my patrol of the armory, storeroom, and archives. Use the two cups on the table to make two cups of coffee. In one of the cups, put something unpleasant. As for what it is, you can decide for yourself. Use your imagination. The only request from me is to not waste too much coffee powder. Those are coffee beans grown on the Feynapotter plateau and hand ground by me!"

"Alright." Although Klein was unsure what Old Neil was up to, he happily agreed to it.

He watched him open the iron gates to the armory with a copper key and then heard the echoing footsteps inside. Slowly, he settled the cups down and confirmed that there was still hot water in the kettle.

He removed the silver tin can's lid and using a tiny spoon with a metallic sheen, Klein scooped a spoonful of rich aromatic coffee powder into each of the two cups. Then, he poured in the hot water and stirred it.

As a transmigrator who came from an era abundant in resources, he was no stranger to coffee. However, it was only limited to instant coffee.

After finishing the task, Klein pondered for a moment and sat down. He crossed his right leg and took some of the mud which had stained the bottom of his leather boots and placed it in the left cup.

Then, he carefully stirred it again until the colors and smells of the two cups of coffee were practically indistinguishable.

A few minutes later, Old Neil walked out the armory while swinging his keys. He then closed the iron gates with a clang.

"Are you done?" His turned his slightly turbid dark red eyes over and looked at Klein across the table.

"Yes," replied Klein with a nod.

Old Neil chuckled and removed the silver chain around his wrist and sat down.

His expression quickly turned serene. He held out his chain-holding left hand and allowed it to hang over the coffee cup to his right. The moonstone nearly touched the liquid.

Amid the relaxing calmness, the moonstone trembled suddenly. It began spinning the chain in a counterclockwise manner.

"This cup is the one with the unpleasant thing," said Old Neil surely.

Without waiting for Klein to confirm, he put away the silver chain and picked up the other cup of coffee and took a sip.

"Do you like bitter coffee? I'm used to having a tablespoon of sugar and a tablespoon of milk."

Klein did not reply but instead asked with his interest piqued, "Your divination sure is accurate. Was it because of the moonstone? That was moonstone, right?"

"This is known as pendulum dowsing in divination. It's also called spirit dowsing. It relies on your own Astral Projection's connection with the spirit world and space to communicate with spiritual intelligence through the aid

of natural materials such as crystals, gems, or special metals. The good and bad of things can be divined… Let's talk about the two cups of coffee. A counterclockwise motion implies bad, while a clockwise motion is good. If it doesn't move, it's neither good or bad. You can write the statement on a piece of paper. Take note, it's a statement and not a question." Old Neil put down the cup of coffee and explained in detail.

Klein asked as though he was thinking, "Does that mean one shouldn't use questioning sentences?"

"Yes, you cannot use "is so-and-so willing to be my fiancée,' but you should instead use 'so-and-so is willing to be my fiancée.' Write it on a piece of paper and place it on the desk. Then use your dominant hand to hold the pendulum chain. Take note, use your dominant hand," said Old Neil with a chuckle. "When doing so, keep your arm straight. Adjust the chain's length and make the moonstone hang just above the piece of paper to the point of almost touching what we wrote. Then, close your eyes and repeat the sentence seven times in your mind. Open your eyes when you are done and see if the spirit pendulum turns or not. If it doesn't, close your eyes again and repeat the process until it moves."

Klein nodded slightly and asked, "Counterclockwise means 'no,' and clockwise means 'yes?'"

"It can also be interpreted as success or failure," corrected Old Neil. He taught Klein the other usages and details of spirit pendulum divination.

Klein pondered over the matter and discovered that it was a very useful divination trick. For instance, he could quickly use it in an unfamiliar environment to determine if the food he was offered was poisonous or not. He did not need any additional knowledge of field biology.

Of course, such divination methods were overly simple. The answers he could receive were limited to two or three. There was no way for deeper investigation or interpretation. For example, although something could be harmful to the body, it could become very beneficial after some processing.

An example was certain foods. They were indeed damaging to the body, but nothing serious. If one was on the brink of starving, eating it would not be a huge problem. These were things that spirit dowsing could not determine.

"I will have to quickly save money to buy crystals or pure silver to create a spirit pendulum…" Klein sighed.

Old Neil looked at him in puzzlement.

"You can apply for one directly. This is standard issue for Beyonders, especially Beyonders like us who take on a support role. There's still a topaz and pure silver spirit pendulum in the armory."

"But I'm still not a formal member of the team…" Klein's heart palpitated in excitement, but he felt a little hesitant.

Old Neil chuckled and said, "For Beyonders, regardless of whether they are formal members or not, they have to be provided with conveniences in other areas since there's no pay rise."

"Maybe the word 'perk' is more suitable. I'll apply with Captain later!" Klein clenched his fists secretly as he made up his mind.

How was he to know if Captain would approve his request without trying?

"Alright," said Old Neil with a smile. "We can officially begin our mysticism curriculum. The basics consist of symbolism. Do you know what symbolism means?"

Klein recalled the bits and pieces he had heard and the things he had seen and heard from his spirit world and the gray fog. He deliberated and said, "Regardless of the spirit world or the illusory stellar space, as well as the unknown realms, they are beyond our sensory world. It's not something that can be accurately described by the information our ears, nose, and eyes obtain. What we obtain are simply indescribable experiences and direct

revelations. They also appear as abstract characters or pictorial symbols. These symbols represent different items and different meanings."

"Very accurate. As expected of a Seer." Old Neil nodded solemnly. "Only by grasping the ability to interpret the symbols can you really take the next step into the world of mysticism. Yes, the pictures on tarot cards and each of the elements in the pictures are symbols. They are man-made symbols that help us understand and interpret primordial revelations."

He pulled out a piece of paper and picked up a fountain pen beside him. He drew a short curve.

Following that, he added a few vertical lines beneath the curve. He looked up at Klein and asked, "Do you know what this symbol represents?"

Klein looked at it for quite a while before saying hesitatingly, "Eyelashes?"

"…" Old Neil exhaled. "This is the symbol of the Bumper Harvest constellation. This is the Thunderous constellation, and this is the Frost constellation…"

He casually drew a few more symbols.

As Klein memorized them, he could not help but comment, "The names of these constellations are really… especially unsophisticated. Yes, unsophisticated!"

How tacky and primordial…

Old Neil revealed a smile.

"Emperor Roselle thought the same back then. He always had the intention of changing the constellation names to things like Virgo, Cancer, and Scorpio. Unfortunately, he did not have the strength to go against tradition. At the very least, these constellations' old names and the corresponding dates they represent guide farming and harvests."

"I have to say that Emperor Roselle sure is a person with ideas." Klein was at a loss for words.

Yes, Emperor Roselle was likely a decent person when he was alive…

Old Neil was unable to understand Klein's humor as he continued explaining the various basic symbols, such as the various constellations, the sun, the crimson moon, the brown star, the red star, and the blue star.

While talking about these, he would teach Klein how to draw the divination astrolabe and indicate what things to pay attention to. He also taught the materials and creation of a crystal ball, and the choice of incantations. The teachings overwhelmed Klein.

If not for his discovery that the Seer potion had improved his memory slightly, he would have long asked Old Neil to stop to aid his digesting of the information.

"That's all for today's mysticism class. Think over it yourself and ask me if you have any questions." Old Neil took out a gold pocket watch and opened it with a snap to check the time. "Do not forget to read the historical documents I prepared for you. To be frank, I feel fear seeing them."

"Alright." Klein took the pieces of paper that were sketched with symbols by Old Neil. He quickly went through the mysticism knowledge he learned today to prevent himself from forgetting it.

Old Neil took a sip of a newly brewed cup of coffee and said, "Memory itself won't do. You have to use if often. That way, you can make the knowledge instinctual. Also, Cogitation has to be carried on every day. Only more practice and usage will allow you to grasp the power of the potion, digging into the mysteries it hides away and removing its unpleasant effects.

With this raised, Klein recalled acting and the Divination Club. He probed, "My potion's abilities are related to divination. Practicing by myself will not

do. I need to make contact with lots of people and divine for them to quickly grasp it. I plan on joining the Divination Club after having some spare cash—the one on Howes Street in North Borough—to become a real Seer."

This was not something he could hide from the Nighthawks in the future. It was better to prepare them.

"Your idea is very similar to Daly's. She has always clamored to be a real Spirit Medium." Old Neil shook his head and laughed. "But why must you wait till you have spare cash? You can apply to Dunn and get him to approve of the expenses!"

"Organizations like a Divination Club might also have cultists or members of evil organizations in them. As a civilian staff member of the Nighthawks and a standard Beyonder, your membership makes it easy for us to monitor them. It's part of the job! We would regularly monitor these places, but as we lack manpower, we can't keep watch on them for long. Now, it can be handled to you."

I can do that? As he looked at Old Neil's serious expression, Klein was dumbfounded.

This is making an expense claim for private matters!

I know nothing about such matters…

Indeed, I'm just a keyboard warrior…

"You wish to use your own money to do this?" Old Neil smiled as he added when he saw Klein's face.

Klein immediately shook his head as he answered firmly, "I plan on reporting it to Captain!"

Old Neil nodded in satisfaction and looked at the cup of coffee with the unpleasant thing inside. It had not been poured away.

"What did you put in there?"

Klein smiled embarrassingly.

"It's just some dirt underneath my boots. Its color and your coffee powder looks almost the same."

Old Neil was taken aback as he suddenly clasped his mouth and roared, "Why aren't you pouring it away yet!?"

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CHAPTER 41
AUDREY AND HER SUSIE

After pouring away the coffee and returning to the armory to take the thick stack of historical materials and explanatory transcripts from Old Neil, Klein followed the wall of lights up the staircase to the Blackthorn Security Company.

Tap. Tap. Tap. His footsteps echoed in the sealed and quiet basement.

After Klein left the spiral staircase, he pushed open the door and identified his bearings before heading for the second office opposite of him.

After familiarizing himself for two days, he had a general understanding of the layout of the Blackthorn Security Company.

The entrance brought visitors to a huge reception hall with sofas and tables. Through the partition, there was an inner region. To the left of the corridor were three rooms. From the nearest to the furthest, they were Mrs. Orianna's account room, a rest room with a few sofa beds, and the staircase that led underground.

On the right were three rooms. From the nearest to the furthest was Captain Dunn Smith's office, a civilian staff office with a typewriter, and the recreation room for formal members of the Nighthawks team.

Klein had previously seen Leonard Mitchell playing cards with two other teammates in the recreation room. He guessed that they were playing Fighting the Landlord. Of course, Emperor Rochelle had already given it a new name—Fighting Evil. However, the way it was played was identical to what Klein knew.

Bredt was entitled to a day of sleep after a night shift. Rozanne was at the reception desk. The carriage driver who was in charge of procuring necessities and collecting supplies, Cesare Francis, was out as usual. When Klein opened the door to the civilian staff office, the three desks inside were empty. Only the typewriter sat there silently.

"Akerson Company's Model 1346 typewriter…" Klein, who had seen similar objects in his mentor's office and Welch's place, muttered. He felt that the complicated mechanisms inside were filled with the beauty of machinery.

He walked to the desk with the typewriter. After preparing himself, he attempted to type something on air.

In the beginning, he often converted the local language to Chinese 'pinyin' instinctively. Only after he was familiar with it did he 'digest' the original Klein's corresponding memory fragment and no longer made mistakes.

Tap! Tap! Tap!

The rhythmic tapping on the typewriter sounded like a melody composed from the heavy marriage of metal and industry. Under this melody, Klein quickly typed the expenditure application.

However, he was in no hurry to meet Dunn Smith. Instead, he focused his mind and read the materials provided by Old Neil seriously. It was both revision and new material.

When it was almost noon, he stretched his neck and put away the documents. He then read and consolidated what he had learned on mysticism in the morning.

Only after all that did he take his application to the office next door and knocked on the door gently.

Dunn was waiting for lunch to be delivered. When he saw Klein hand him the document, the corners of his mouth curved up.

"Did Old Neil teach you this?"

"Yes." Klein did not hesitate to betray Old Neil.

Dunn picked up his dark red fountain pen and signed it.

"I happen to be applying for funding for the months of July, August, and September from the Church and the police department. I'll add yours in. When it's approved, get the money from Mrs. Orianna. You can draw the spirit pendulum in the afternoon."

"Alright," Klein answered simply and vigorously.

His tone and eyes were obviously filled with joy.

Before bidding Dunn farewell, he asked casually, "Shouldn't the budget for July, August, and September be applied for by June?"

Why are you applying for July's budget only in July?

Dunn fell silent for a few seconds before sipping his coffee.

"We encountered three cases in June. I was so busy that I forgot about it."

As expected of Captain and his poor memory… Klein knew he had asked a question he should not have asked. He gave a chuckle before leaving immediately.

With that, he began a simple but regular lifestyle. He would spend half an hour in the early morning Cogitating. He would have two hours of mysticism lessons in the morning and an hour and a half of studying the historical documents. After lunch, he would take a short nap in the break room to regain his energy.

Following that, he would draw bullets and head to the Shooting Club. After finishing his practice, he would stroll over to Welch's place, which was not too far. He would then change routes and return to Iron Cross Street. That way, he could save on the carriage fees. If he had time, he would practice his Spirit Vision and Spirit Dowsing. On the way, he would buy groceries.

…

In a private chemistry laboratory equipped with apparatus and items.

A tall, blond Audrey was looking at the cup in her hand. There were countless bubbles and it made the atmosphere serene.

Finally, the liquid in the cup precipitated into a sticky silver substance.

"Haha, I'm indeed talented in mysticism. I succeeded in one try! I was worried of failure and prepared two sets of materials!" the girl muttered to herself in delight.

She put away the items she took from her family's vault or exchanged them with others. She took a deep breath and prepared to close her eyes to drink down the Spectator potion.

At that moment, barking sounded from outside the laboratory. Audrey frowned instantly.

She hid the cup of silver liquid in a dark corner, turned around and headed to the door.

"Susie, who's here?" Audrey turned the doorknob and asked the golden retriever sitting in front of the door.

Susie wagged her tail in an obsequious manner. Her personal maidservant, Annie, had appeared in the corridor nearby.

Audrey walked out of the laboratory and closed the door. She looked at Annie and said, "Didn't I tell you? Do not disturb me when I'm running chemistry experiments."

A vexed Annie answered, "But there's an invitation from the Duchess, Duchess Della."

"Duke Negan's wife?" Audrey took a few steps forward and asked Annie.

"Yes. She has managed to hire the services of the palace's baker, Madam Vivi, and plans to invite you and Madam to afternoon tea," Annie recounted the invitation.

Audrey tapped her cheeks discreetly and said, "Tell my mother that I have a headache. Perhaps I'm a little dehydrated because of the scorching sun. Please get her to convey my apologies to Madam Della."

As she spoke, she acted frail.

"Miss, it's not only afternoon tea, but a literature salon," added Annie.

"But that won't treat my dizziness. I need rest," rejected Audrey firmly.

Simultaneously, she muttered deep down. *If they insist, I'll faint for all of you to see. The etiquette teacher said that I can do it most perfectly… I think I heard something?*

"Alright," Annie exhaled and said. "Do you need me to help you back to your room?"

"There's no need. I'll clean up the laboratory first." Audrey was yearning to return immediately to consume the potion.

However, she suppressed her impatience. She only returned to the laboratory's entrance when she saw Annie leave.

Suddenly, she discovered that the golden retriever, Susie, who was waiting outside, was gone. Furthermore, the door to the laboratory was half opened.

"I forgot that Susie can open doors with handles… What was that sound? Not good!" Audrey heard crisp sounds coming from within. Suddenly, she came to a realization as she charged into the laboratory.

All she could see was the cups shattered on the floor. Susie was licking the final drop of silver liquid.

Audrey stood rooted at the entrance like a statue.

Susie immediately sat down and looked at her owner innocently as she wagged her tail.

…

In the seas beyond the Pritz Harbor, there was an island perennially enveloped in storms. An ancient sailboat was docked at its harbor.

A blond man dressed in a robe with lightning patterns was looking at Alger Wilson opposite to him. He asked, perplexed, "Alger, you could have returned to the kingdom and become a captain of a Mandated Punisher team or a reputable bishop. Why did you choose to voyage out into sea and become the captain of the Blue Avenger?"

Alger wore a stoic expression on his rough face. He replied solemnly, "The sea belongs to the Storm. This is the Lord's kingdom. I'm willing to abide by the Lord's will and monitor this area of His kingdom."

"Alright." The blond haired man clenched his fist and struck his chest. "May the Storm be with you."

"May the Storm be with you." Alger replied with the same standard salute.

He stood on the deck with a few sailors and watched his companions leave the boat, walking into the distance.

"Sainz, you do not understand because you do not know enough…" Alger muttered silently.

Meanwhile, Audrey finished her second concoction in a panic-stricken state.

Seeing that the silver potion looked nothing different from before, she was nearly moved to tears.

Gulp. She quickly drank down the Spectator potion.

…

Friday. A storm befell Tingen. The heavy rain pounded on the windows of every household.

Inside the Blackthorn Security Company, Klein, Rozanne, and Bredt sat on the sofa in the reception hall and enjoyed lunch.

As there was only a kettle for boiling water, there was no way to heat up leftovers. Klein could not eat rye bread every day or take the carriage home every day. If he did that, he would have to walk from Iron Cross Street to Welch's place in the afternoon and consider taking a carriage back. It was a waste of money; therefore, he began joining Rozanne and his colleagues in eating the so-called 'office rations.'

The nearby Old Will's Restaurant would punctually send a waiter at half past ten every day. He would ask for their orders and after determining the quantity, he would send it over at half past twelve. The food was contained in what resembled meal boxes. At three, he would return to take their orders for dinner and take back the utensils.

The 'rations' included meat, vegetables, and bread. Although the quantity was lacking, it was barely sufficient to fill a person. A cost of a meal ranged from seven to ten pence depending on the different premium levels.

Klein would always thicken his skin and order the meal costing seven pence. Typically, there was half a pound of wheat bread, a tiny piece of meat cooked in different ways, a ladle of thick soup with vegetables, and tiny bits of butter or margarine.

"We actually only have one Nighthawk here today…" Rozanne said as she delivered a spoonful of thick soup into her mouth.

"I heard that a case with cultist elements is going on in Golden Indus. Therefore, the police department has requested for two Nighthawks…" Bredt said as he put down his bread.

Klein used the remaining wheat bread and dabbed it into the last bits of meat juice before stuffing it into his mouth. He did not say a word.

Under his left sleeve, there was a silver chain with a topaz hanging.

At that moment, knocks sounded outside the half-closed main door.

"…Please come in." Rozanne was taken aback as she put down her spoon. She quickly used a handkerchief to wipe her mouth and stood up.

The door was pushed open as a man in a halved top hat came in. The left shoulder of his black formal suit was drenched.

The sides of his hair had grayed. He put away his umbrella and said to Klein and company, "Is this the former small mercenary squad?"

"You can say that," answered Rozanne like clockwork.

The lanky man coughed and said, "I have a mission request."

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CHAPTER 42
BUTLER KLEE

A mission request… You probably came to the wrong place… This security company's signboard is really nothing but a signboard…

Klein immediately held back his urge to lampoon when he heard the visitor. How he yearned for there to be a message board and a screen for him to share his thoughts.

But he soon realized that he had once asked a similar question. The captain's answer was that they could take on jobs if they were free. The money earned could be used as funding for the team's petty cash account and bonuses for the participants.

Rozanne's eyes darted around as she thought for a moment before saying, "Our security personnel are all out on missions. The fastest it will take for them to return is an hour. If your matter isn't urgent, you can consider our services."

Among the six formal Nighthawk members, Captain Dunn Smith had been invited to the cathedral by the bishop for some unknown discussion. Leonard Mitchell was guarding Chanis Gate in his place.

Corpse Collector Frye and Sleepless Royale Reideen had already headed to the Golden Indus Borough to assist the police in the investigation of a robbery case with cultist inklings. Sleepless Kenley White was on leave, while Midnight Poet Seeka Tron had gone to Raphael Cemetery in the north suburb for a daily patrol.

As for the remaining two Beyonders, Old Neil was frail and too advanced in his years. He had not taken any missions in a long time. Klein was still a novice and was truly inadequate in various aspects.

"They are all out…" With one hand holding his umbrella, the lanky man's expression turned gloomy as he took off his hat. He bowed and said, "Sorry for intruding. Goodbye."

He turned around and walked out. He went down the stairs and left 36 Zouteland Street amid the spattering rain and howling winds.

"What a bloody pity." Rozanne watched the man left and sighed regretfully.

Although she would not have gotten any share of the commission, she definitely would have been able to partake in a sumptuous meal.

"There's nothing we can do about it. Chanis Gate needs someone watching it all the time." Klein put down his cutlery in satisfaction. Even though he did not like the soup mixture of turnips and vegetables, he still drank it clean. "Don't tell me you want Bredt to take the mission? Or yourself?"

Rozanne rolled her eyes and giggled.

"Bredt won't do, but you can. Our Mister Seer…"

The moment she finished her sentence, she immediately realized what she had just said. She covered her mouth in shock because the door had not been fully closed. It someone walked past outside or heard anything about Beyonders, it would be considered a leak.

"Thankfully Captain isn't around…" Rozanne looked out the door and secretly stuck her tongue out. "Or I'll have to go for confession again!"

Bredt and Klein laughed out in unison as they exchanged looks before beginning to put away the cutlery.

After everything was done, Klein, who did not bring his umbrella, decided to stay at Blackthorn Security Company due to the ongoing rain.

He took out some newspapers and sat on the soft but bouncy sofa as he leisurely began his 'afternoon break.'

"The airship route from Backlund to Desi Bay is now in service…"

"The complete anthology of the Great Detective Manseng is publishing soon…"

"An advertisement for Lagolas Weapons? A standard model revolver carrying six bullets costs three pounds and ten soli, a double barrel gun costs two pounds…"

…

Klein flipped through the Tingen City Honest Paper when a particular piece of news suddenly caught his attention.

"…the suspect responsible for killing Mr. Welch and Miss Naya has been caught. We believe it is a much-needed reprieve from the horror that has gripped North Borough, Golden Indus Borough, and East Borough… Welch's father, Mr. McGovern, who is a banker, has escorted his youngest son's corpse back to Constant City where a grand burial will be held…"

After reading it a few times, Klein suddenly sighed.

From the looks of it, Welch's father had bought the police's explanations and did not hire a private investigator to investigate the matter…

His grief from losing his youngest son can't be any greater than that of my parents who lost their only son…

In a sullen mood, Klein sat there motionless for a long time.

He neither found it odd that he was not invited to Welch's and Naya's burials, nor did he feel depressed.

Once everything calms down, I'll find a chance to offer a bouquet of flowers to their graves… Klein was about to take a nap in the break room when a knock came from the door of the reception hall again.

"Please come in." Rozanne, who was nodding off, suddenly jolted awake.

The half-closed door was pushed open again. The lanky man from before walked in once again.

"Can I wait here? Your mercenaries, no— security personnel should be back soon, right?" He asked sincerely, trying his best to hide his anxious expression.

"Sure. Please have a seat." Rozanne pointed at the sofa nearby.

Klein asked out of curiosity, "Where did you hear about our security company? Who introduced you here?"

He had made two trips despite the heavy afternoon storm while still willing to wait?

Yes. The Nighthawks must have easily resolved missions that might seem very difficult to others. They must have accrued quite a reputation…

The man left his umbrella outside the door and as he walked to the sofa, he replied with a rueful smile, "I have traveled the nearby streets and paid a visit to all the mercenaries, uh—security companies and private investigators. You are my only hope. The others do not have the manpower to take additional missions… To be frank, if not for the waiter that delivers meals, I really did not imagine that there was another security company here."

…It's completely different from what I imagined… Klein was stunned.

Rozanne interjected with a question, "They are very busy? Are there that many missions?"

The man sat down and sighed.

"You are a mercenary team, no—a security company. I believe you must have heard of the armed burglary murder at Howes Street?"

Howes Street… Armed burglary murder… Alright, unfortunately, I'm one of the people involved… Klein nodded with a slightly heavy heart.

"Yes."

"Due to the presence of a ferocious and cruel criminal, the rich men living in the neighboring streets, and even across all of Tingen City, are terrified. Apart from increasing the numbers of their security detail, they have also hired many more security personnel and private detectives. This resulted in a shortage of supply in your line of work," the tall and skinny man explained clearly.

A standard chain-reaction… Klein and Rozanne exchanged looks and saw the self-deprecating smile from each other's faces.

The security industry had entered a golden age. Yet, Blackthorn Security Company was not affected in any way. It was apparent how dismally the company was run.

Of course, to a certain extent, it also proved the success of the Nighthawks in hiding themselves.

After waiting for another twenty plus minutes, Klein prepared to leave since the rain was coming to a stop. He planned on practicing at the Shooting Club.

At that moment, the black-haired and green-eyed Leonard Mitchell walked out of the partition. He looked curiously at the sofa.

"This is?"

"A client. Is Captain back?" Rozanne asked delightfully.

"Back?" The lanky man was taken aback when he heard that.

He had been sitting there, staring at the door. How did he not discover someone's return?

Rozanne's expression immediately froze as she chuckled.

"As a security company, we don't only use the front door."

"Figures." The lanky man nodded in enlightenment.

He was also not surprised by the term 'Captain.' Security companies were mercenary teams or small-scale mercenary guilds. It was normal for 'Captain' to be used.

Leonard did not tuck in his white shirt. His black vest was also casually draped on. He took a glance at the lanky man when he suddenly snapped his fingers and said, "I'm a member of the security personnel at Blackthorn. How might I address you? How may I help you?"

Perhaps it was because he had long heard about the unrestrained characters of mercenaries that he did not feel the anger of being humiliated. Instead, he let out a breath of relief.

He watched Leonard sit down, and organized his words.

"My name is Klee, a butler of Mr. Vickroy, a tobacco merchant. His only son, little Elliott, was kidnapped this morning. We have already informed the police and the matter has been given high priority. However, Mr. Vickroy remains uneasy. He wishes to go through the channels which mercenaries, uh—security personnel have, as well as your understanding of

Tingen, to investigate the case from a different angle and ensure that little Elliott is rescued safely."

"If you are able to find where the kidnappers are hiding, Mr. Vickroy will be willing to pay you 100 pounds. If you have the means to successfully save Young Master Elliott, he is willing to pay double. 200 pounds."

Leonard Mitchell smiled leisurely.

"Mr. Vickroy seems to only wish for us to find the kidnappers' hideout? If not, he will not think that his only son is worth a hundred pounds. A tobacco merchant who has close ties with the southern plantations will not just offer two hundred pounds."

"No, Mr. Vickroy is only an ordinary merchant. He's not considered wealthy. Besides, he believes the police will be more professional when it comes to rescuing his son," Klee answered frankly.

"Alright. No problem." Leonard snapped his fingers again.

His green eyes turned their gaze on Rozanne.

"My beautiful lady, please write up a contract."

"Don't always act like a poet. In fact, all you do is recite the works of others." Having forgotten the presence of the client, Rozanne quipped. She was used to exchanging snipes with Leonard.

Of course, the Blackthorn Security Company did not really care about its clients. It was great to have them, but it was also fine not having them.

Rozanne left the reception counter and entered the staff office. Soon, there were sounds of typing coming out from the office.

The corners of Klein's mouth twitched a little. He found them too unprofessional.

There was no standard template for a contract!

This sure is tragic…

And more saddening is the fact that I'm working at such an unprofessional company…

The moment these thoughts arose in him, Rozanne completed a simple contract that had only a few clauses. Then, Klee and Leonard Mitchell signed it.

After Klee stamped it, she took the contract and returned to the accounting room and got Mrs. Orianna to stamp it with the Blackthorn Security Company logo—something that was actually useless. Dunn typically handed it to Orianna for safekeeping. On Sunday, it would be passed to Rozanne and company.

"I'll wait for your good news." After receiving one copy of the contract, Klee stood up and bowed with his hat off.

Leonard did not respond. He seemed to be in deep thought.

He suddenly turned his head toward Klein and revealed a smile.

"I need your help."

"Ah?" Klein was taken aback.

"I mean you and I can finish this mission together." The corners of Leonard's mouth curved up slightly as he explained, "I'm good at combat, shooting, climbing, sensing, and chanting, and taking on some support roles. But that does not include looking for people. You don't expect Old Neil to go out in such weather, right?"

When he said 'sensing,' his voice was lowered to a mumble that Klein could barely hear.

"Alright." Klein did have the urge to attempt his new 'abilities,' while also feeling a little wary toward Leonard Mitchell.

Phew. Let's hope it will be completed successfully… I wonder how useful my Seer abilities will be… He wondered with some anticipation.

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CHAPTER 43
SEARCH

While looking at Klein, Leonard smiled and nodded.

"Then, do you need anything from them?"

He had cooperated with Old Neil and company numerous times, so he naturally knew that divination required a medium, especially when the person being divined was not present.

Klein thought for a moment before saying to Klee, "I need some of Elliott's recent clothes which have not been washed or starched. It would be better if you have any accessories he used to wear on him."

He tried to choose ordinary mediums, not something that would normally invite questions.

But even so, Klee wore a look of puzzlement.

"Why?"

After his question, he added, "I have a picture of Young Master Elliott on me."

Why? Because we are divining his location… Klein was momentarily at a loss for an answer.

If he answered truthfully, ignoring the fact that it violated the confidentiality clause, Klee would likely storm out immediately and rip

apart the contract while cursing, "This bunch of cheats! If that works, why don't I find the most famous Spirit Medium in Awwa County!"

By the side, Leonard Mitchell chuckled and said, "Mr. Klee, my partner, um—colleague rears a unique pet. Its sense of smell is sharper than a hound's. That's why we need clothes that little Elliott wore and items he used to wear on him to aid us in finding him. As you know, clues typically bring you to a general region."

"As for the picture, we would need it too. Both of us need to know what little Elliott looks like."

Klee accepted the reason by nodding slowly.

"Will you be waiting here, or will you be going with me to Mr. Vickroy's residence in the city?"

"Let's go together. It saves time," replied Klein simply.

Not only was he eager to try out his abilities as a Beyonder, but he also wanted to save the child.

"Alright, the carriage is downstairs." As Klee spoke, he took out a black-and-white photograph and handed it to Leonard.

It was a picture of Elliott Vickroy alone. He was about ten years old with rather long hair that nearly covered his eyes. There were obvious freckles on his face and he did not seem to stand out.

Leonard glanced at it and handed it to Klein.

Klein took a careful look and placed the photograph into his pocket. Then, he took his cane and put on his hat. He followed the two out of Blackthorn Security Company and boarded the carriage downstairs.

The carriage's interior was rather spacious. It was lined with thick carpet and a tiny table to rest items on.

As Klee was around, Klein and Leonard did not say a word. They quietly took in the experience of traversing the pooling roads in a carriage.

"The carriage driver is quite good." Leonard broke the silence after some time with praise and a smile.

"Yeah." Klein answered perfunctorily.

Klee forced a smile and said, "Your compliments are his honor. We will be there soon…”

As they were afraid of alerting the kidnappers, the carriage did not stop at the Vickroy's residence. Instead, it stopped at the side of a nearby street.

Klee held an umbrella and returned along. After waiting for some time, Leonard talked to Klein again.

"My surmise the last time was not without a goal. I was just trying to tell you that the notebook will definitely appear again. Perhaps, it might be soon."

"That really isn't a happy surmise." Klein used his chin to gesture towards the carriage driver outside, indicating that he did not wish to discuss sensitive topics with outsiders around.

Leonard whistled and turned his head to look out the window. He saw raindrops streak across the glass, leaving behind blurry marks. It made the world outside a complete blur.

After a while, Klee returned with a bag of items. Since he walked in a hurry, the edge of his trousers were soiled and his shirtfront was slightly wet.

"These are the clothes Young Master Elliott wore yesterday. This is the Storm Amulet he used to wear."

Klein took it and glanced at it. He discovered it to be a miniature gentleman's formal suit—a small shirt, vest, bow tie, etc.

And the Storm Amulet was made of bronze. It was carved with symbols representing gales and sea waves, but they did not trigger Klein's perception.

"I'll recount in detail the incidents leading up to Young Master Elliott's kidnapping. Hopefully, it will let you find him easier…" Klee sat down and described the nightmare that happened in the morning, hoping that the helpers he went through great trouble to hire would be of help.

Klein and Leonard held no interest in the specifics. All they cared about was the number of kidnappers, if anything unusual had happened, or if they had any weapons.

"Three," "normal," "armed with firearms…" After obtaining the desired information, they bade Klee farewell and hired a two-wheeled light carriage.

Unlike public carriages, private-hire carriages were either four-wheeled or two-wheeled. They were charged either by time or distance. The latter was at four pence a kilometer in the city and eight pence a kilometer outside. The former cost two soli per hour or part thereof. After the first hour, there were additional charges of six pence every fifteen minutes. In inclement weather or if the customer needed to go faster, the fare could even be higher.

Klein had heard from Azik that in the capital, Backlund, these carriage drivers were famous for quoting outrageous prices.

To him, taking a private carriage was quite a luxury. However, he did not need to worry about this at the moment since Leonard had tossed two one-

soli notes to the carriage driver.

"Charge it by the time." After Leonard gave his instructions, he closed the carriage's door.

"Where are you going?" The carriage driver was delighted and puzzled as he held the two notes.

"Wait a moment." Leonard cast his gaze at Klein.

Klein nodded slightly and took out Elliott's clothes. He spread it out on the carriage's floor and then wound the Storm Amulet around his cane's handle.

He held the silver-inlaid black cane and hung it straight over Elliott's clothes.

He gathered the sphere of light in his head as his mind rapidly turned still. His brown eyes quickly turned deeper in color as he entered a half-Cogitation state.

He felt the his body's "spirit" turning light. He vaguely saw the world of spirits everywhere. He silently said, "Elliott's location."

After repeating it seven times, he released his grip of the black cane, but the cane did not fall to the ground. It remained standing in front of him even though the carriage was shaking!

Minute but invisible stirrings happened around Klein and he felt as if pairs of eyes were looking at him.

Over the past few days, Klein had felt this sensation occasionally when he was in the state of Cogitation or Spiritual Vision.

With a little fear, he looked at the cane with his deep black eyes. He recited once again in his heart, "Elliott's location."

"Elliott's location."

After he finished saying that, the cane fell and pointed straight ahead.

"Straight." Klein held the cane and said in a deep voice.

His voice sounded a little ethereal as though it could penetrate the unknown world.

This was one of the divination abilities he had grasped. It was called "Dowsing Rod Seeking." The tool of choice had to be wooden, metallic, or a mixture of both.

In ordinary circumstances, he would require two real dowsing rods. Dowsing rods were shaped like two straight metal wires tapered to an edge. He would hold on to the shorter side and turn it to ascertain the correct direction. But as a Seer, Klein realized that through practice, he could search for people directly using this method. He could also use his cane as a replacement for dowsing rods. The direction in which the cane fell was the direction of the item he was seeking.

As for the Antigonus family's notebook, Klein could not remember it at all. Without the slightest impression, there was no way for him to find it.

"Go straight." Leonard instructed the carriage driver loudly. "We will tell you when there's a need to turn."

The carriage driver did not understand why that was necessary, but the notes in his pocket and the willingness of his passengers to hand over the money kept him quiet. He chose to follow the strange instructions.

The carriage proceeded slowly, passing through one street after another.

Midway, Klein used Dowsing Rod Seeking to correct their direction.

After the carriage circled a building once, he finally determined that Elliott was inside. It had only been thirty minutes since they bade Klee farewell.

After sending off the cane, Klein did not continue using Elliott's clothes. Instead, he placed the cane, entwined with the Storm Amulet directly onto the ground.

His eyes turned dark once again as the raindrops around him suddenly spun in place.

The cane fell to the front with a slant. Klein pointed at the staircase and said, "There."

"At times, I really envy Old Neil. Similarly, I envy you now." Upon seeing this scene, Leonard smiled with a sigh.

Klein shot him a glance and replied with a calm tone, "This is nothing difficult. If you are willing to learn, you would definitely be able to master it… Your perceptivity should be very high, right?"

Leonard nodded and chuckled.

"That's not something good."

He quickened his pace and walked into the building amid the ending rain.

Klein was afraid of drenching his formal suit, so he jogged in tow.

The building only had three stories. It was similar to a unit block from Earth. The entrance to each floor was situated along the flight of stairs. There were only two units on per floor. Klein used Dowsing Rod Seeking on both the first and second floors, but the cane remained still while pointing upward.

The two of them quieted their footsteps and arrived at the third floor. Klein once again placed the black cane on the floor.

Whoosh!

A breeze blew across the stairs as his pupils changed colors. The darkness seemed like it could suck the souls of people.

Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh!

Sobs seemed to sound out around them.

Klein relaxed his palm as the cane with the entwined Storm Amulet magically stood erect.

He silently read "Elliott's location" again. He watched his black cane drop silently as it pointed to the right room.

"They should be in there." While Klein picked up his cane, he tapped his glabella twice.

Various colors saturated as he looked at the right room. He saw all sorts of auras inside.

"One, two, three, four… Three kidnappers and one hostage. The numbers match… One of their auras is short. It's likely Elliott… Mr. Klee said that they have two hunting rifles and a revolver…" Klein whispered.

Leonard chuckled.

"Let me recite a poem for them."

"Why be a kidnapper? Why can't you happily be civilized person?"

He put down the bag with Elliott's clothes and took two steps forward. His expression suddenly turned serene and melancholic.

His magnetic and deep voice gradually sounded.

"Oh, the threat of horror, the hope of crimson cries!

"One thing at least is certain—that this Life flies;

"One thing is certain, and the rest is Lies;

"The Flower that once has bloomed forever dies…”

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CHAPTER 44
FATE

Leonard's singing sounded like a lullaby as it lightly resounded through the doors and into the winding wooden stairwell.

Klein's mind immediately turned torpid. He felt like he saw a silent moonlight and serene rippling lake.

His eyelids rapidly turned heavy as if he were about to fall asleep standing.

Amid these indistinct sensations, he also felt a strange, formless, and indifferent focus on his back. It felt like he was wandering the spirit world himself.

A baffling sense of déjà vu suffused as Klein suddenly found his train of thought once again. With his strong spiritual perception and extreme familiarity with Cogitation, he barely escaped the influence of the Midnight Poem.

However, he remained serene and could hardly evoke any emotions.

Soon, Leonard stopped singing as he turned his head with a smile.

"I'm considering asking Captain's permission to apply for a Feynapotter lute. How can there not be an accompaniment when singing?

"Heh heh, I'm just kidding. I can hear them asleep."

The black-haired, green-eyed Nighthawk with his poetic vibe took a stride forward and walked to the door that separated them from the kidnappers

and hostage.

He suddenly moved his shoulder and threw a punch at the door's lock.

Crack!

The wooden board around the lock shattered in a muffled manner.

"This requires precise control." Leonard turned his head and smiled. He then reached his hand into the hole and opened the door.

Klein, who had regained consciousness, was not as confident as him. He reached under his armpit, drew his revolver, and turned the cylinder, making sure that he could shoot at a moment's notice.

As the door swung back, he saw a man sleeping on a table with a gun by his feet. Another man was rubbing his eyes in a daze while trying to stand up.

Bam!

Leonard slid forward and struck the awakening kidnapper unconscious.

Klein planned to enter as well when he suddenly sensed something. He turned around abruptly and faced the stairwell.

Tap. Tap. Tap. Footsteps were approaching from below. It became clear that "something" was a hatless man in a brown coat circling the stairwell in his progression toward the third floor while hugging a paper bag of bread.

Suddenly, he stopped. He saw a gun's barrel aiming at him with a metallic luster.

His pupils reflected a young man dressed in a halved top hat, black formal suit with a bow tie of the same color. It also reflected the cane which rested along the rail and the dangerous revolver.

"Do not move. Raise your hands. Three, two, one…" Klein's tone was deep but relaxed.

He held the revolver with both hands as he tried to imagine the man as a target from his practice.

Amid the tense atmosphere, the man in the brown coat threw the bag of bread and slowly raised his hands.

"Sir, is this a kind of a joke? Has there been a misunderstanding?" He stared intently at the finger that Klein had placed on the trigger as he forced a smile.

Klein was temporarily unable to determine if he was an accomplice or a neighbor, but he did not reveal any abnormalities. He said in a deep voice, "Do not attempt to resist. Someone will determine if it's a misunderstanding in a while."

At that moment, Leonard, who had finished handling the kidnappers, walked out and noticed the man in the stairwell. He said leisurely, "So the kidnappers have another accomplice responsible for buying and delivering food?"

Upon hearing this, the man's pupils constricted as he suddenly raised his foot and kicked the bag of bread up in an attempt to block Klein's vision.

Seemingly unaffected, Klein coldly pulled the trigger like his usual training.

Bang!

Blood burst out from the man's left shoulder.

He tumbled to the ground and attempted to escape from the second floor; however, Leonard had already reached his hand towards the handrail before leveraging himself to jump over.

With a dull thud, Leonard landed on the man from above.

The man fainted as Leonard swatted away some of the blood that had splattered on him. He looked up at Klein and chuckled.

"Nice shooting."

I was trying to hit his legs… The corner of Klein's mouth twitched in an indiscernible manner as he caught a whiff of the smell of blood.

He discovered that despite not having any enhancements to his visual, auditory, or tactile senses after consuming the Seer potion, he could still "see" obstructed objects and "hear" faint footsteps, allowing him to take preemptive judgment.

Was this in the scope of spiritual perception? Klein nodded in thought as he watched Leonard find a sharp dagger in the accomplice's possession and "drag" him into the room.

With a gun and cane in each hand, Klein entered the kidnapper's room. They saw Elliott Vickroy jolt awake from the gunshot as he straightened his body and sat up slowly from a huddled position.

Leonard had securely tied up the three kidnappers with the rope they used against Elliott. Bunched together, they were thrown in a corner. The lack of rope was made up by tearing their clothes.

The unconscious man who had been shot in the shoulder was bandaged, but Leonard disdained getting his hands dirty, so he did not help him extract the bullet.

"W-who are you people?" Elliott stammered in pleasant delight when he saw the scene before him.

"Yes, you guessed right. Very precise." The genuflecting Leonard answered casually.

I never expected this bastard to have some humor cells in him… Klein lowered his revolver and said to Elliott, "We are mercenaries hired by your father. You can also call us security personnel."

"Phew, for real? Have I been saved?" Elliott said joyfully without daring to make any movements.

It was apparent that he had suffered quite harshly in the short few hours of being a kidnapping victim. He did not have the kind of rashness someone his age normally would have.

Leonard stood up and said to Klein, "Go downstairs and find some patrolling cops. Get them to inform the tobacco merchant. I do not wish to walk out with a child and four idiots like a kidnapper."

Klein, who was wondering about the aftermath, nodded. He put away his revolver, picked up his cane, and walked to the staircase.

As he went down the stairs, he had a nagging feeling that he had forgotten something. In addition, he heard Leonard say to Elliott, "Don't be nervous. You will soon see your father, mother, and your old butler, Klee. Why don't we play a round of Quint?"

…

Klein held back his laughter and walked out into the streets. With the help of pedestrians, he found two patrolling policemen.

He did not use his badge and identification as a member of the Special Operations Department; instead, he used his identity as a professional security company and recounted the happenings factually.

As for him holding a gun, he was not worried at all. He had received an all-purpose weapon usage certificate the day before yesterday. His application was accelerated by going through internal channels.

The two policemen exchanged looks and one of them left to gather reinforcements and inform the Vickroy family. The other policeman followed Klein to the kidnappers' room.

After waiting for more than forty minutes, Leonard signaled to Klein while the policeman was not paying attention. Klein was to sneak out of the room with him.

"Trust me, heading to the police station is an extreme waste of time. Let's leave first," the Nighthawk with the poetic bearing explained with a relaxed look.

Since Leonard was making it clear that he would take any responsibility for any repercussions, he did not retort and followed in tow.

Almost five minutes later, a few carriages rushed to the building where the kidnappers were. The old butler, Klee, disembarked with his portly master, Vickroy.

Up to this moment in time, he was still in a daze. He found it incredulous that news would come so fast. It felt like a dream.

Suddenly, he heard a crisp snap as he turned around.

A two-wheeled carriage drove past with its windows open. The black-haired and green-eyed Leonard had snapped his fingers again.

After passing by Vickroy's carriage, Leonard closed the window, turned around, and looked at Klein.

He extended his right hand and smiled.

"It was a pleasure working with you!"

I don't think we are on that good terms… Klein politely shook his head.

He did not expect the kidnapping case to be resolved so quickly. All he could do was marvel at the capabilities of Beyonders. Even though he was just a half-assed Sequence 9 Beyonder, he was able to do many inconceivable things.

"This is a celebratory gesture of peace among aristocrats after a clash of swords," explained Leonard with a smile.

"I know." Klein had many aristocratic classmates.

He looked outside the window and said with a frown, "Shouldn't we confirm with Mr. Klee? If he believes that the police rescued Elliott, our commission will be halved."

A total of 100 pounds!

There was no doubt about their providing of the kidnappers' location from their 'meeting' from before.

"Don't mind it. To us, money isn't that important," said Leonard with a shrug.

…It's very important to me!

Klein forced a polite smile and said, "Many poets died early from poverty."

Leonard chuckled.

"I believe Elliott would not lie on this matter. I can tell that he still has some of his innocence left in him. However, you will not get much of the 200 pound commission either."

"How much would I get?" asked Klein immediately.

"As the unspoken rule has always been, half of the commission would be handed to Mrs. Orianna as additional funding for the team. The remaining

would be split among members. A pity you aren't a formal member; you will only get about ten percent of the remaining half."

10 pounds? That isn't bad either… Klein pretended to feel the pinch as he asked, "Aren't you worried that the kidnappers will realize that they were under the influence of a Beyonder's powers after they wake up?"

"They will not suspect anything. They will only believe that the weather was good and very conducive for sleeping, leading to them dozing off. They will even believe that the song existed only in their dreams. This is something we have verified before," answered Leonard very confidently. "Instead, it's your demon hunting bullets that might arouse suspicion. Of course, you being a queer who enjoys mysticism would be a perfectly reasonable explanation."

"I see." Klein was relieved. He just kept feeling like he had forgotten or overlooked something.

…

After returning to Zouteland Street, Klein did not wait for Klee's arrival. He strolled to Welch's place and took a different route home. On the way, he bought some beef and olives for dinner.

The meal was enjoyable as always, with the same three siblings chatting idly. However, there was an additional visitor.

He was a worker responsible for collecting one penny for the gas meter.

The evening grew dark as the siblings bade each other good night and returned to their rooms.

Klein was sleeping soundly when he was suddenly awoken by something familiar outside. He opened the door in puzzlement and arrived outside the bedroom that no one stayed in.

He pushed open the mottled door and saw a gray desk.

There was a notebook on the table and its cover was made of hard paper. It was completely black in color.

A baffling sense of déjà vu arose in him as he walked over and opened the notebook.

The page he flipped open to was of a picture—a picture of someone dressed in gorgeous clothes and splendid headdress—The Fool!

Beneath The Fool was a line in Hermes.

"Everyone will die, including me."

Horror gripped Klein's heart as he suddenly realized that the corner of The Fool's mouth was curving up!

Fffffff!

He sat up in shock as he saw crimson moonlight penetrate his curtains. He saw his bookshelf and desk and the silhouette of his own bedroom. He realized that he had had a nightmare.

As a Seer, he knew what dreams typically portend. Therefore, he began to seriously search through his recollections.

Klein froze up when he did because he knew what he had missed out on today!

While he was immersed in Leonard's singing, he had sensed a formless and indifferent focus on his back.

The feeling of being observed felt different from the usual Cogitation or experience he had from using Spirit Vision. It gave him a sense of déjà vu!

According to Captain Dunn, once a feeling of déjà vu arose in him, it probably means…

Klein suddenly sat straight and confirmed the feeling.

Yes, it's that notebook! That Antigonus family's notebook!

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CHAPTER 45
RETURNING

The Antigonus notebook is in the apartment across the kidnappers'!

Although it was very coincidental, Klein believed that his intuition was correct.

He immediately got out of bed and rapidly changed out of the old clothes he usually wore to bed. He picked up a white shirt beside him and draped it on, quickly buttoning from top to bottom.

One, two, three… He suddenly realized that he was "missing" buttons. The left and right sides did not seem to match.

On careful look, Klein realized that he had made a mistake buttoning the first button, causing the shirt to warp.

He shook his head helplessly before taking a deep breath and slowly breathing out, using some of his Cogitation techniques to restore his calm.

After putting on his white shirt and black trousers, he barely managed to wear his armpit holster steadily. He pulled out the revolver he hid under his soft pillow and holstered it.

Without time to tie a bow tie, he draped his formal suit on and with a hat and cane in each hand, he walked to the door. After putting on his halved top hat, Klein gently twisted the door handle and walked into the corridor.

He carefully closed his bedroom's wooden door and sneaked downstairs like a thief. He used a fountain pen and paper in the living room to leave a

note, informing his siblings that he had forgotten to mention that he had to be early for work today.

The moment he was out the door, Klein felt a cool breeze and his entire being calmed down.

The street in front of him was dark and silent without any pedestrians. Only the gas lamps illuminated the streets.

Klein took out his pocket watch from his pocket and snapped it open. It was just six in the morning and the crimson moonlight had not completely faded away. However, there was a hue of sunrise over the horizon.

He was just about to seek out an expensive for-hire carriage when he saw a two-horse, four-wheeled trackless carriage approaching him.

"There are public carriages this early in the morning?" Klein was puzzled as he went forward and waved for it to stop.

"Good morning, Sir." The carriage driver stopped the horses skillfully.

The ticketing officer beside him had his hand to his mouth while yawning.

"To Zouteland Street." Klein scooped out two pennies from his pocket and four halfpence.

"Four pence," the ticketing officer replied without any hesitation.

After paying for the ride, Klein got onto the carriage and found it empty. It exuded a clear loneliness amid the dark night.

"You are the first one," said the carriage driver with a smile.

The two brown horses widened their pace as they proceeded briskly.

"To be honest, I never imagined there to be a public carriage so early in the morning." Klein sat near the carriage driver and made idle chatter to divert his attention and relax his tense mind.

The carriage driver said in a self-deprecating manner, "From six in the morning to nine at night, but all I earn is one pound a week."

"Are there no breaks?" inquired Klein in bafflement.

"We take shifts to rest once a week." The carriage driver's tone turned heavy.

The ticketing officer beside him added, "We are in charge of plying the streets from six to eleven in the morning. Following that, we have lunch and an afternoon break. Near dinnertime, which is six in the evening, we replace our colleagues… Even if we do not need rest, the two horses will need it."

"It wasn't anything like that in the past. There was an accident that should not have happened. Due to fatigue, a carriage driver lost control of his carriage and it toppled. It resulted in us having shifts… Those bloodsuckers would never become this kind so suddenly otherwise!" The carriage driver scoffed.

Under the illumination of dawn, the carriage drove towards Zouteland Street and picked up seven to eight passengers on the way.

After Klein was less tense, he did not converse further. He closed his eyes and recalled the experiences from yesterday, hoping to notice if he had forgotten anything.

By the time the skies were bright when the sun was fully up, the carriage finally arrived at Zouteland Street.

Klein pressed his hat with his left hand and briskly jumped off the carriage.

He quickly stepped into 36 Zouteland Street and arrived outside Blackthorn Security Company after going up the flight of stairs.

The door was still closed and had yet to open.

Klein took out the ring of keys by his waist and found the corresponding brass key and inserted it into the keyhole and twisted it.

He pushed forward as the door slowly opened. He saw the black-haired, green-eyed Leonard Mitchell sniffing at a recently popular cigarette.

"To be honest, I prefer cigars… You seem to be in a rush?" the poet-like Nighthawk asked in a relaxed and cozy manner.

"Where's Captain?" Klein asked instead of answering.

Leonard pointed at the partition.

"He's in the office. As an advanced Sleepless, he only needs two hours of sleep in the day. I believe it's a potion those factory owners or bankers would like the most."

Klein nodded and quickly passed through the partition. He saw that Dunn Smith had opened the door to his office and he was standing at its entrance.

"What's the matter?" Dressed in his black windbreaker, he held a gold-inlaid cane with a solemn and stern expression.

"The feeling of déjà vu came to me. It should be the notebook. The Antigonus family's notebook." Klein tried hard to make his answer clear and logical.

"Where was that?" Dunn Smith's expression did not have any obvious changes.

However, Klein's intuition told him that a clear and invisible stir had happened in him. This was possibly a flash of his spirit or a change in his emotions.

"It's at the place Leonard and I saved the hostage yesterday. Opposite the kidnappers' room. I didn't notice it back then until I had a dream and received a revelation," Klein did not conceal anything.

"From the looks of it, I missed out on making huge contributions." Leonard, who had walked to the partition, chuckled.

Dunn nodded slightly as he instructed with a solemn expression, "Get Kenley to replace Old Neil's watch of the armory. Let Old Neil and Frye come with us."

Leonard stopped acting frivolous as he immediately informed Kenley and Frye who were in the Nighthawks' recreation room. One of them was a Sleepless and the other was a Corpse Collector.

Five minutes later, the two-wheeled carriage that came under the jurisdiction of the Nighthawks began driving down the sparse streets in the morning.

Leonard wore a feather hat, a shirt and a vest. He stood in as the carriage driver, lashing out a whip from time to time, sending out a crisp crack.

Inside the carriage, Klein and Old Neil sat on one side. Facing them were Dunn Smith and Frye.

The Corpse Collector's skin was so white it looked like it either had not been under the sun in a very long while or he had a severe blood deficiency. He looked to be in his thirties with black hair and blue eyes. He had a high nose bridge and his lips were very thin. He had a cold and dark demeanor and had a faint smell from often touching corpses.

"Repeat the situation again in detail." Dunn adjusted the collar of his black windbreaker.

Klein stroked the hanging topaz in his sleeve as he began from their mission commissioning until the dream. By the side, Old Neil chuckled.

"Your fate seems to be entwined with that Antigonus family's notebook. I never expected you to meet it in such a manner."

That's right. Isn't this too much of a coincidence!? Thankfully, Leonard just mentioned that there was no indication of hidden factions of mysterious powers at play from the preliminary investigations of Elliott's kidnapping. It was solely a crime motivated by money. Otherwise, I would really suspect if someone had deliberately arranged for this to happen… Klein found the situation rather curious.

It was too coincidental!

Dunn did not express his ideas as he was in deep thought. Likewise, Corpse Collector Frye maintained his silence in his black windbreaker.

Only when the carriage stopped at the building mentioned by Klein was the silence broken.

"Let's go up. Klein, you and Old Neil walk behind. Be careful, very careful." Dunn got off the carriage and pulled out a strange revolver with a clearly long and thick barrel. He stuffed it into his right pocket.

"Alright." Klein did not dare take point.

After Leonard found someone to watch the carriage, the five Beyonders walked orderly into the building. With very light footsteps, they arrived at the third floor.

"Is this the place?" Leonard pointed at the apartment opposite the kidnappers.

Klein tapped his glabella twice and activated his Spirit Vision.

In this state, his spiritual perception was enhanced again. He found the door familiar as if he had once entered it before.

"Yes." He nodded in affirmation.

Old Neil also activated his spiritual perception and after observing carefully, he said, "There's no one inside, nor are there any spiritual glows of magic."

Corpse Collector Frye added with his hoarse voice, "There aren't any evil spirits."

He could see many spiritual bodies, including evil spirits and restless wraiths, even without activating his Spirit Vision.

Leonard took a step forward and, like yesterday, punched the door's lock.

This time not only did the surrounding wood shatter, even the door lock flew and fell noisily to the ground.

Klein seemed to feel an invisible seal instantly vanish. Immediately following that, he caught a whiff of an intense stench.

"Corpse, a rotting corpse," Frye described coldly.

He did not appear to suffer from nausea.

Dunn reached out his black-gloved right hand and pushed open the door slowly. The first thing that they saw was a chimney. For early July, there was an abnormal heat emanating the room.

In front of the chimney was a rocking chair. Sitting on it was an old woman dressed in black and white. Her head hung low.

Her body was abnormally large. Her skin was blackish-green and swollen. It felt like she would explode from a simple prod, spewing a foul rotting stench from within. As maggots and other parasites squirmed between her flesh, blood, and rotting juices, or clothes and wrinkles, they appeared like points of light in Spirit Vision. They seemed to cling close to an extinguished darkness.

Pa! Pa!

The old woman's eyeballs dropped to the floor and rolled a few times, leaving behind a yellowish-brown streak.

Klein felt disgusted and being unable to tolerate the putrid stench any longer, he bent over and puked.

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CHAPTER 46
PORTRAIT

Eugh! Eugh!

Klein squatted there, vomiting involuntarily. He was soon done with his puking since he did not eat breakfast.

At that moment, a tin-colored square flask that looked like a cigarette box appeared in front of him.

The mouth which had lost its stopper emitted a mixture of smells akin to tobacco, disinfectant, and mint leaves. It cleared up Klein's nose and rejuvenated him.

The pungent smell continued to linger, but Klein no longer felt nauseous. He soon stopped vomiting.

He traced the tiny flask up and saw a pale hand that did not seem to belong to a member of the living. He saw the mouth of a black windbreaker's sleeve and saw Corpse Collector Frye with his cold and dark bearing.

"Thank you." Klein recovered completely and with his hands on his knees, he stood back up.

Frye nodded without any expression.

"It'll be fine once you are used to it."

He put back the flask's stopper and put it into his pocket and turned around, walking to the highly decomposed corpse. Without gloves, he began

examining the old woman. As for Dunn Smith and Leonard Mitchell, they paced slowly around the room, occasionally touching the table's surface or newspapers.

Old Neil pinched his nose and stood outside the door, grumbling in a muffled voice, "Seriously gross. I'm going to request for additional pay this month!"

Dunn turned his head over and touched the wall beside the chimney with his gloved right hand. While doing so, he asked Klein, "Does this place look familiar?"

Klein held his breath and constructed the silver pocket watch in his mind to calm down.

With him already in his Spirit Vision state, he immediately felt different. A scene that came from the deepest recesses of his memories flashed past his eyes.

Chimney, rocking chair, table, newspapers, the rusty nails on the door, the tin cans inlaid with silver…

The scenes were dark and dull, like a documentary from Earth. However, it was even more blurry and illusory.

The scene quickly stacked against what Klein was seeing. The feelings of déjà vu and having been here before presented themselves clearly. An illusory and ethereal scream seemed to pass through invisible walls:

"Hornacis… Flegrea… Hornacis… Flegrea… Hornacis… Flegrea…”

"It feels a little familiar." Klein answered honestly while his brain felt a stabbing pain. Thankfully, he quickly tapped his glabella twice.

Hornacis… The Hornacis mountain range that appeared in original Klein's diary?

That is content that was deciphered from the Antigonus family's notebook…

The murmurs were very similar to one of the previous ones. It involved the word 'Hornacis' Is this a form of enticement?

Klein was gripped by shock as he did not dare think deeper, afraid that he would place himself on the trajectory of losing control.

Dunn nodded slightly and walked to a cupboard. He suddenly reached out his hand and pulled open its wooden door.

The bread inside was moldy and there were about seven gray, stiff dead rats.

"Leonard, go downstairs to get patrolling cops and explain the situation here," instructed Dunn.

"Alright." Leonard turned and left the apartment.

Following that, Dunn opened the door to two other bedrooms and did a careful search.

After being certain that there were no clues as well as any sign of the Antigonus family's notebook, Frye also stood up. He wiped his hands with a white handkerchief he brought along with him and said, "The time of death was more than five days ago. There are no external injuries nor are there any clear signs that it was a result of Beyonder powers. The exact cause of death will require a postmortem."

"Did you discover anything?" Dunn turned to look at Old Neil and Klein.

The two who were no longer in Spirit Vision state shook their heads in unison.

"Apart from the corpse, everything else is normal. Actually, no, there was an invisible energy sealing the apartment in the beginning. As you know,

there will usually be similar processes when we use ritualistic magic," Old Neil thought for a few seconds before adding.

Dunn was just about to say something when he looked outside the door. A few seconds later, Klein and Old Neil sensed something and turned to look at the stairwell.

A few seconds later, faint footsteps grew louder as Leonard walked up with a policeman.

The policeman's expression changed once he caught the noxious smell. He immediately cooperated with his "colleague" from the Special Operations Department and began knocking on the doors of the residents on the second floor to gain an understanding of the situation on the third floor.

Moments later, the corporal with his two silver chevrons looked at the corpse on the rocking chair.

"Katy Stefania Bieber. Between 55 and 60 years old. Widow. Has rented this apartment with her son, Ray Bieber for more than ten years."

"Her husband was formerly a gem artisan. Her son is about thirty years old and is single. He inherited his father's trade and earns about one pound and fifteen soli a week. According to their neighbors, they have not seen them in more than a week."

Before the policeman continued, Klein already knew the critical point that followed.

Missing. To be more precise, it was unknown where Ray Bieber had gone to!

The ancient notebook could very well be on him!

"Do you have a picture of Ray Bieber?" Dunn looked at the police officer. He was acting as the role of a high-ranking inspector.

However, it was not really acting since he was indeed a high-ranking inspector on the police department's roster. His salary and various allowances were also paid according to his rank. Of course, it did not include his salary from the Church.

The police officer shook his head nervously and said, "I'm not sure… I'll have to return to the station to search for it. It's not typical for us to have pictures of every single person."

"Got it. Continue questioning the residents on the first floor. Ask them in detail." Dunn gave the order.

As he watched the police officer leave, he closed the door and turned to Old Neil.

"I'll leave the rest to you. If not, we will have to make all the residents sleep and obtain Ray Bieber's looks. Yea, I don't really trust sketches based on verbal descriptions."

Old Neil nodded. He took out a few thumb-sized bottles from a pocket in his black classic robe and scattered the liquids in a particular order.

Immediately following that, he pulled out a clump of powder and scattered it in a circle around him.

Strangely, a biting smell spread and was not influenced by the nauseating smells in the room. Klein also suddenly noticed that there was an invisible forcefield around him. It separated him from the environment and everyone else. It was like the room in its previous state.

Old Neil half-closed his eyes as his lips mumbled a soft and indiscernible incantation. Without being prepared, Klein vaguely heard the words, "Goddess, give me strength," "We look forward to the protection of the Night…”

Hum! A sudden wind tore through the windows and blew up the powder.

Klein's heart quaked suddenly as he felt goosebumps all over him. He found it difficult to describe. A terrifying "smell" that made him afraid of looking directly spread rapidly.

He was confused as he tensed up, unable to relax. It felt as though he had plunged into a state similar to what one would have after working on a highly advanced mathematical problem.

Suddenly, Old Neil's eyes opened, his eyes pitch-black.

He took out a fountain pen from his pocket and began drawing on a piece of scrap paper on the table. He was so fast that his entire body was trembling.

Klein focused his gaze and saw a face with recessed eyes and a tall nose bridge rapidly appear.

When the natural curly short hair was done, Old Neil wrote a single line beneath the portrait.

"Black hair, deep blue eyes. Left of his mouth is a fully ceramic tooth implant."

Pada! The fountain pen in Old Neil's hand fell onto the paper as his body convulsed a few times.

"This is the image of Ray Bieber according to what's left in the room." Old Neil whispered as the color of his eyes restored rapidly.

Then, he turned back to his original spot and slowly circled it. The invisible forcefield that isolated things immediately dissipated in the form of a breeze.

"Praise the Lady." Old Neil tapped his chest in four spots, forming the shape of the crimson moon.

Klein's taut nerves relaxed as he made more acute observations. He discovered that there was nothing special about Ray Bieber's facial features. He had a relatively mild bearing. The only thing was that his philtrum sagged clearly.

"I'll try using Dowsing Rod Seeking." He picked up the portrait and found male clothes in the bedroom and spread them onto the ground.

Dunn, Leonard, and Old Neil did not stop him as they watched him place the black cane above the clothes and portrait. Frye was as silent as always.

Klein's eyes turned from brown to black as he finished his recitation, only to release his grip.

The black cane stood silently like it was embedded in the ground.

"Ray Bieber's location." Klein silently repeated to himself again.

With the sound of humming wind, the cane fell down but kept changing directions while falling. Finally, it began spinning in slight circles.

Without any external help, the black cane stood stably again.

Klein repeated a few times with the same outcome. All he could do was shake his head at Dunn and Old Neil.

A strange power was interfering with his "divination…”

Dunn took off his black glove and said to Leonard and Klein, "Take Ray Bieber's portrait and inquire the residents for a final confirmation. Following that, we will issue a warrant of arrest against him for the murder of his mother."

"Alright." Klein held his cane and bent down to pick the portrait.

After the neighbors confirmed that the portrait was indeed Ray Bieber, Dunn instructed Leonard and the police officer to finish the procedures at the station. He and Frye headed to a few bars in Tingen City to seek help via other means.

Klein and Old Neil returned to Blackthorn Security Company on a public carriage. It was not even eight by the time they arrived; Rozanne had not even clocked in.

After closing the door, Klein cocked his head at Old Neil and, hoping to learn and answer his questions, asked him, "Why would I send the Antigonus family's notebook to Ray Bieber's home?"

This was completely in a different direction from Iron Cross Street where Welch stayed.

Old Neil walked to the sofa and chuckled.

"Isn't that obvious? Who knows what powers inside the notebook you invoked; maybe you did some described ritual out of curiosity and ended up provoking a strange existence that you should not have. The motive of this existence was to have the notebook sent to Ray Bieber and sever all clues, to prevent anyone from discovering it."

"Therefore, apart from you who were selected, Welch and Naya committed suicide; regarding you… To be frank, I still have no idea how you survived."

"I would like to know too…" Klein sat down as well as he deliberately replied with a wry smile. "I've also thought of the guesses you have of the proceedings. However, there's one thing I don't understand. Why did I have to hand the notebook to Ray Bieber?"

Old Neil shrugged and said, "Perhaps his Life Path Number ^{1} matches the requirements, or maybe he's one of the last remaining descendants of the

Antigonus family. In short, there are too many possibilities… And why the notebook was sold to Tingen City would have similar reasons."

"I believe it's the descendant reason." Klein suddenly felt enlightened before he sighed. "Unfortunately, I did not discover immediately, and Ray Bieber and that notebook have vanished."

Old Neil laughed.

"This is something that Dunn has to worry about. As for you, it's something good."

"Why do you say so?" Klein frowned in puzzlement.

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CHAPTER 47
OLD NEIL'S LACK OF MONEY

Old Neil rubbed his temples and said, "I believe we have a general idea of why the three of you engaged in a mass suicide. That notebook is also now purportedly in Ray Bieber's hands. Furthermore, the matter has already been exposed. Regardless of whether you are alive or dead, it will hardly influence any subsequent developments. I think—I believe that the surreptitious existence or mysterious power that caused all of this will not pay you any special attention. It's just like how you would not pay attention to the ants on the ground. Heh heh, as long as you do not try to make Him recall you.

"And our arrest warrant for Ray Bieber will quickly reach the Secret Order. They will also be able to guess that it is related to the Antigonus family's notebook. Believe me, for a secret organization that has been in existence for more than a thousand years, it has many channels of information. Therefore, their focus will be diverted to Ray Bieber's whereabouts, in a bid to find the notebook before us. They will not, nor is it possible for them to harass, stalk, or deal with you.

"Lad, congratulations on stepping out from the shadows of the past. What follows will be a brand-new journey filled with sunlight."

Klein nodded when he heard that as he said in a happy and relieved manner, "I hope so."

Having transmigrated here, he had been enveloped in uncertainty. Now, it felt like it had finally dissipated…

However, Klein was still feeling uncertain because the notebook seemed to be tied to him in a certain manner. It went to the point of him bumping into remnant clues coincidentally from a normal mission of rescuing a hostage.

He was afraid that there would come a day when a delivery man would send him a parcel, only to realize that it was that Antigonus family notebook after opening it up!

Let's hope everything will go as Old Neil described… He silently prayed.

When Old Neil heard his reply, he immediately scoffed.

"You don't seem to be a devout believer of the Goddess. At this moment, shouldn't you be drawing the sign of the crimson moon at your chest and say—may Goddess bless us?"

"Mr. Neil, you don't seem like one either. A real devotee would not say 'what follows will be a brand-new journey filled with sunlight.'" Having been studying mysticism under Old Neil, Klein had established a decent friendship with him, so he did not stand on ceremony to return a sarcastic remark.

Both of them locked eyes and chuckled with great rapport. At the same time, they tapped their chests four times.

"Praise the Lady!"

At that moment, they heard the grinding sounds of machinery as the main door to Blackthorn Security Company opened.

The elegant Mrs. Orianna with her fashionably coiled hair stepped into the reception hall with a light-green dress.

"Good morning, Mr. Neil. Good morning, Klein." She held a small leather handbag as she greeted with a smile. "It's another fabulous day today. A pretty good day."

"Good morning, Orianna. You are still as beautiful as ten years ago," replied Old Neil with a chuckle.

Orianna's eyes turned to slits as she upturned her face.

"Mr. Neil, the way you praise is still as infuriating as ten years ago."

She enunciated the words 'ten years.'

"Is that so?" Old Neil looked at Klein, confused. He wore a perplexed look.

Never mention anything that will remind the ladies of their age… As a keyboard warrior that knew a little of everything, Klein instantly understood what had peeved Mrs. Orianna. He smiled lightly and said,

"Good morning, Mrs. Orianna. You are as beautiful as always."

"Thank you, our outstanding Khoy University graduate." Orianna smiled with a nod before saying, "That old butler has already paid the mission's commission. According to Captain's rules, half of it will be used as additional funds, while the other half will be split between you and Leonard. But since you aren't a formal member, you can only take ten percent of the half. Come over later to sign for it."

"How much did he pay?" Klein asked happily while also feeling the pinch.

"200 pounds. This was what he said back then—'Lord, the esteemed Storm! I never imagined or believed that this was resolved just like that! This is even harder than us having a dream! Why is your security company so unknown? It's an insult to the entire industry!'" Mrs. Orianna mimicked the old butler's southern accent.

Klein thought seriously for a few seconds before saying humorously, "This is just too unfair for those kidnappers."

Two Beyonders had resolved the problem quickly using methods that could be described as easy and pleasant… This is like an adult bullying a few kids while in full combat attire…

"They were just too unlucky. They must have lost the protection of the divine," said Orianna with a soft laugh. "I told the butler that we were only lucky. One of our informants happened to see the kidnappers bring the child into the hideout. Therefore, do not have too much hopes for us. We really are just a very ordinary security company."

Typically speaking, the more you emphasize something is ordinary, the more extraordinary it is… Klein lampooned with a smile. He watched Mrs. Orianna walk through the partition and enter the accounting room.

Old Neil puckered his lips by the side and said enviously, "You really are a lucky lad. You haven't joined us for long and you've encountered a job worth 200 pounds."

"Is that very rare?" Klein asked in puzzlement.

Prior to this, he was either studying history or mysticism, or wandering aimlessly outside, hoping to find clues with his spiritual perception.

"According to Orianna's accounts, we might not encounter a single job an entire week. And most jobs are worth less than twenty pounds." Old Neil rubbed the moonstone by his wrist and sighed.

Following that, he looked at Klein with anticipation.

"If you encounter any similar jobs in the future, remember to inform me."

Upon hearing Old Neil's words, Klein suddenly felt a strange feeling arise in him. Therefore, he asked directly, "Mr. Neil, you seem to be lacking in money. How much do you get paid a week? If you aren't comfortable telling me, just ignore my question."

Old Neil leaned back into the sofa and chuckled.

"This isn't something that needs hiding. I've been here for so many years. At present, I will obtain salaries from both the Church and the police department every week; a total of twelve pounds."

"A weekly salary of twelve pounds?" Klein blurted out in surprise.

A weekly salary of twelve pounds with fifty-two weeks a year, that meant more than 600 pounds a year!

Back when he read the Tingen Morning Post and Honest Paper, they had mentioned that high-profile lawyers only earned 800 to 1000 pounds a year. And those were the best lawyers!

As for the managers of Benson's trading company, they only earned six pounds a week. That was already quite a decent job.

"Yes, such a salary is actually quite generous, and we do not need to pay any taxes," added Old Neil with a smile.

Klein had heard from Benson that one had to pay E-type taxes when their weekly salaries exceeded one pound. In other words, the government and corporate employees had to pay 3% of taxes if they earned one to two pounds, 5% for two to five pounds, 10% for five to ten pounds, and 15% for ten to twenty pounds, capping at 20% for those above twenty pounds.

Other than that, he also read of four other kinds of taxes on the newspapers. A-type was related to land, housing, and other earnings from material items. It included property and rent. B-type was a tax paid by farmers. C-type was a tax on profits from bonds, funds, and equities. D-type was commercial, finance, or professional income.

"It's something admirable." Klein echoed Old Neil.

"However—" Old Neil shook his head. "Such a salary is insufficient for Beyonders like us who have to frequently study the hidden mysteries, practice and attempt rituals."

"Aren't materials obtainable via application?" asked Klein in puzzlement.

Old Neil scoffed.

"There's a limitation to it. At times, we have to give a sufficient legitimate reason. If you want to learn more and experiment in the field of mysticism, you can only spend your own dime to buy materials. It can be bought internally or at underground markets."

Klein jolted in surprise as he immediately asked, "There are Beyonder materials that are sold in underground markets? I thought the Churches would not permit their existence?"

He was lacking in means to obtain materials!

With him having a mysterious organization in its nascent stages, he could not always have them settled via the Nighthawks, right?

"There's no way to control such matters. Yeah, from the viewpoint of mysticism, all beings are sentient with their spirits and they stem from the same source. The materials we use are not limited to those extraordinary creatures. It also comes from ordinary animals, plants, and minerals. For example, the poison hemlock, gold mint leaves, and night vanilla in the bottle of Seer potion; they are items we can encounter frequently in our daily lives. They might not have any extraordinary characteristics, but they have special characteristics. Through concoction and blending, they will derive certain effects. Therefore, this is not a trade that the Church can ban," explained Old Neil in detail.

Without waiting for Klein to say a word, he continued, "Besides, it's not only the core of extraordinary beings that are of use. For example, the Lavos Squid. Apart from its blood, its eyeballs, skin, and tentacles are

pretty good materials. Unless the Church captures it entirely with its own manpower, to completely corner and control any outflows would be a tremendous financial burden. The lower the grade of the extraordinary material, the more it is so. They can only do their best to prevent the more special materials from flowing out."

Old Neil suddenly laughed. "There's another important reason. It's better to know of an underground market than not knowing of it. Under the premise that secret organizations have not been fully eliminated, this is a pretty good strategy. Besides, it can help us obtain materials we are lacking. Of course, with the existence of such markets, contraband items will appear. As long as it's not something ridiculous or overly dangerous, we will turn a blind eye to it. At most, we would use them to enrich our vaults."

"Is it because the few large Churches put each other in place, so no one can take excessive action?" Klein guessed.

Old Neil acknowledged tersely but did not elaborate.

"I'm a Seer. In the future, I'll definitely need to practice and will need more materials. Mr. Neil, can you take me to the underground market to have a look?" Klein requested with a valid reason.

Old Neil appeared to be placed in a difficult position.

"In fact, those guys who are active in those places are mostly not Beyonders. Some of them might be aristocrats that like mystery or rich people who have inclinations towards mysticism… Uh, alright. I have a thirty pound bill that needs paying soon. It wouldn't be convenient for me to head over there for the time being."

"Alright…" Klein never expected the reason to be Old Neil's owing of money.

Moments later, he said with deliberation, "Mr. Neil, do you need me to lend you money? I just earned a commission of ten pounds."

"Haha, there's no need. I'll be able to settle it." Old Neil patted the sofa and slowly stood up. "Sigh, age is truly an enemy that biological creatures can't fight. I'm exhausted from last night's watch. Yeah, revise what I've taught you later this morning. Read more documents. Tomorrow, I'll teach you the foundations of ritualistic magic."

"Alright." Klein got up and bade him farewell by taking off his hat.

When Captain Dunn did not return at noon, Klein pretended that he was still searching for the notebook as he roamed the streets again.

Having earned ten pounds, he no longer needed to wait for the next disbursement of the funds. He could head directly to the Divination Club!

Cogitation and Spirit Vision have been occasionally producing murmurings and illusions. It made him eager to begin 'acting.'

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CHAPTER 48
HANASS VINCENT

In the Divination Club situated at the second floor of 13 Howes Street, North Borough of Tingen City.

Klein saw the beautiful lady that attended to visitors once again.

She was still having her brownish-yellow long hair coiled, making her look mature and elegant. It was hard to tell her age.

"Hello, Mr. Glacis isn't here today. Would you like to change fortune-tellers today?" said the beautiful lady with a smile.

Upon hearing that, Klein, who had just taken off his silk hat and put it back on, was immediately surprised.

"You still remember me?"

That was already five days ago!

The woman puckered her lips into a smile.

"You are the first customer that sought Mr. Glacis's services. You are also the only one to this very day. It's hard for me not to have a deep impression of you."

Was this the image of him being penny-wise, pound-foolish? Klein lampooned himself as he deliberated a question.

"When was the last time Mr. Glacis came to the club?"

The lady shot a glance at him and answered seemingly in recollection, "To be honest, we are unable to grasp when our members will come and go. They have their free will and personal matters to tend to. Well, I do believe that Mr. Glacis hasn't come to the club since he told your fortune that day."

I wish him the best of luck. May the Goddess bless him… Klein prayed and did not ask further. Instead, he asked with a smile, "I'm not here for divination services this time. I plan to join the club."

"Really? That's our pleasure." The lady expressed a timely look of surprise delight. "For the first year as a member, the membership fee is five pounds. It will be one pound a year thereafter. I believe there's no need for me to describe in the details again?"

Klein took out a five-pound note he recently received as he watched Henry Augustus I's portrait depart him.

After seriously checking the anti-counterfeit watermark, the woman stored away the note seriously and handed a form to Klein.

"Please fill in your detailed information. Let me prepare the receipt for you."

There's a receipt? You should bill it to Blackthorn Security Company… Klein was amused by his own thoughts as he picked up a fountain pen on the desk. With the blackish-blue ink, he filled in his name, age, address, and company information.

However, he had deliberately left his date-of-birth empty. To a Seer, that provided profound mysteries about his body through his Life Path Number.

After receiving the receipt and finishing his registration as a member, the lady extended her right hand.

"Congratulations on joining Tingen City's Divination Club. I'm Angelica Barrehart, your hardworking server. This is your member cufflinks. There

are special inscriptions on them which will identify you as a member."

"Hello, Madam Angelica." Klein shook her hand and took the dark gold cufflinks.

He realized that the special inscription was written with the root word for 'fortune-teller' in Hermes.

Angelica retracted her right hand and thought for a few seconds.

"Might I ask what divination arts you are most familiar with? Or would you prefer to learn some divination methods from the club? We will consider inviting famous fortune-tellers of the corresponding domain to give classes. We will also introduce you members with similar expertise so that you can have a good time interacting with them."

"I know a bit of every divination art. There's no need to give me any special considerations." Klein replied with some embellishments. In addition, he inquired, "Can I begin telling the fortunes of others? I'm not a total rookie."

He was here to act as a Seer and not learn the divination methods ordinary people could learn.

Angelica maintained a polite smile as she said, "You can tell the fortunes of people anytime in the club. However, before we confirm your skills, we will not promote you when our customers ask. How much do you plan on charging for your fortune-telling?"

"Two pence." Klein decided to gain at advantage with price while he was still unknown.

"We will go by the standard of taking an eighth, so we will be taking a quarterpence for fees…" Angelica repeated the various rules first before writing Klein's information into the fortune-teller album which customers could choose from.

After all of this was done, she pointed at the meeting room at the far end of the corridor with a smile.

"Mr. Hanass Vincent is currently explaining astrolabe divination. You can find a quiet spot to listen in. You can also raise your questions if there are any queries."

"Alright." Klein walked toward the meeting room with his interest piqued. He wanted to know the differences between what Hanass Vincent and Old Neil said.

At that moment, Angelica chased up and whispered, "Mr. Moretti, would you want coffee or tea? We provide Sibe black tea, Southville coffee, and Desi coffee."

Klein, who had been reading the papers regularly, knew that these coffees and black tea were considered as one of the inferior varieties, but he also knew that they were definitely of better quality than the ones he had at home. After some thought, he said, "A cup of Southville coffee. Three teaspoons of sugar without milk please."

Loen Kingdom's Southville was famous for its beer and red wine; many important figures were fond of them. However, their coffee was relatively unknown.

"Alright, I'll send it to you in a bit." Angelica pointed towards the meeting room.

Klein slowly walked to the half-closed door and heard a voice in a thick Awwa accent explaining, "Astrolabe divination is a relatively more complex one among the divination arts…"

But that's only for ordinary people… Klein silently tagged on a sentence for the speaker. He saw about five tables placed in a circle inside the meeting room. It surrounded a middle-aged man in a black classic robe, Hanass Vincent.

The gentleman had obvious dark circles. His brown hair was thick and hard. Each strand stood firmly like a porcupine's spikes.

Apart from that, there was nothing unique about him.

Upon seeing Klein enter, Hanass Vincent nodded gently without stopping his class. He only slowed down his speech.

Klein had one hand in his pocket while the other held his cane. He found a seat to the sides and sat down, leaning back comfortably in the process. He scanned the circle of six members. There were four men and two women.

Some of them were attentively taking notes, whispering, or returning Klein a rueful smile.

After placing his cane down, Klein adjusted his halved top hat and tapped his glabella twice in the process.

He cast his gaze at Hanass and saw the different colors, brightness, and thickness of his aura.

"Dark red. He's a little worried… Actually, every other part of his body is healthy except that part. I wonder what's wrong…" Klein listened to the class while muttering to himself.

At that moment, he clasped his right hand and covered his mouth to prevent his laughter from sounding. He suddenly felt like he was a quack.

He was rather pleased with his Spirit Vision ability. Although he could only make a general judgment and not the details, it was enough to gain him many useful information.

After surveying his surroundings, he tapped his glabella twice again as though he was pondering over what Hanass had just said.

Astrolabe divination was one of the astromancy divination methods. However, ordinary people could also attempt to interpret things. For instance, the most basic birth horoscope was to determine the inquirer's fate by determining the positions of the sun, moon, blue and red stars at their birth, the corresponding spots in the sky, matching the representative symbols to the astrolabe, and the corresponding situations of the different constellations.

This required the fortune-teller to be able to calculate the states of the planets and constellations which was rather complicated. Of course, there were publications that aided people to look up the values. Some even simplified it by making a vague read with just the constellations.

Klein listened silently without interjecting or asking any questions. From time to time, he would caress the hanging topaz at his sleeve or take a sip of the Southville coffee which Angelica had brought in.

After some time, Hanass rubbed his glabella and said, "Perhaps you will need to attempt at creating your own astrolabe. Ask me if you have any questions. I will be in Moonstone."

After he left, a young man in a white shirt and black vest got up with a smile and walked to Klein's side.

"Nice to meet you. I'm Edward Steve."

"My pleasure. I'm Klein Moretti." Klein stood up and returned the bow.

"Astrolabes are too complicated. Every time I hear about it, I can't help but doze off," said Edward self-deprecatingly.

Klein grinned and said, "That's because Mr. Vincent can't help but pass the knowledge he grasps to us. It's like giving us an Intis feast. It's just indigestible."

"I'd be able to finish the Intis feast. They usually use a huge plate to serve tiny bits of food." Edward chuckled and sat up. He asked out of curiosity, "Are you new? I've not seen you in the two years I was here."

"I just joined the club today," answered Klein frankly.

"What are you good at? I'm best at tarot and poker divination," Edward casually asked.

"I know a little of everything, but just a little." Klein gave a description he used to give himself.

He was not being modest since there was just too much mysterious knowledge he had not grasped in the domain of divination.

Just as the other members were thinking of talking about horoscope divination, Angelica walked into the meeting room.

"Mr. Steve, someone wants you to tell their fortunes."

"Alright." Edward stood up with a smile.

"I can tell you are an excellent fortune-teller," said Klein as he looked at him.

"No, it's because my price is most suitable," said Edward with a soft chortle. "When ordinary people come to have their fortunes told, they will absolutely not choose the most expensive ones. And unless they had their heads kicked by asses, they would definitely not be choosing the cheapest few. It's easiest to gain opportunities if you are in the middle."

I'm one of those that had their heads kicked by asses… When he saw Edward leave, Klein suddenly shook his head with a wry smile.

It seems the price I set is problematic…

He stood up, picked up his cane, and left the meeting room. He found Angelica again.

"I wish to change the prices of my divination. Uh, set it to eight pence."

Angelica took a deep look at him and said, "We will satisfy your request, but we will also tell customers that you only recently joined the club."

"No problem." Klein did not mind as he nodded.

At times, mystery was also an important element for a Seer to attract customers.

After changing his details, Klein returned to the meeting room.

At that moment, he saw Hanass Vincent walk out of Moonstone. He held a silver-coated mirror.

This well-known fortune-teller said to the five members in the meeting room, "I recently learned a new divination art. Magic mirror divination. Does anyone want to learn?"

Magic mirror divination? That's not safe… Klein paused outside the meeting room and frowned.

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CHAPTER 49
DIVINATION ART

As a Seer who had just stepped through the gates of mysticism, Klein did not dare to claim he knew much. However, he was certain he knew more than ordinary people. He was aware that the various kinds of divination arts could be split into three categories based on particular standards.

And that standard was based on the source of the revelation!

The first category of divination included tarot, poker, pendulums, dowsing canes, and dreams. By using the inquirer's own spirituality and its communication with the spirit world to gain a revelation, it could be interpreted for an answer. However, spirit pendulums and dowsing canes had very high requirements of one's spirituality, Spirit Body, and Astral Projection. Non-Beyonders were unable to obtain precise or clear revelations. Card divination provided fixed symbolism, presenting even an average person's faint revelation. Dreams were somewhere in between the other forms.

The second category included Spirit Numerology and astromancy, as well as their derived forms. The fortune-teller used either the personal details of the inquirer, or changes in nature before using calculations, inference, and interpretation to answer their questions. With this method, the initiative did not lie in the inquirer, but the fortune-teller.

The third category used an external third party, separate from the inquirer and the fortune-teller. The Ouija boards that Klein was familiar with from his previous life belonged in this category. They used rituals to ask for a direct answer from the unknown or the supernatural. Even though there was a high chance that an average person would not succeed, there were cases

where they managed to communicate with malicious spirits or entities that drove them to insanity. These methods of divination usually led to tragedies.

The magic mirror divination that Hanass Vincent mentioned belonged to the third category. In mysticism, mirrors were connected to the unknown and mystery, like they were the doors of the spiritual world. Thus, Klein stopped outside the meeting room, intending to learn how the famous fortune-teller would explain the divination. Klein wanted to ascertain if he needed to inform the captain or not, raiding him at night.

Of course, there was a safe way to do the magic mirror divination; one could ask for answers from the seven orthodox divinities. Even if it was very difficult for an ordinary person to receive any real revelations, they would not be in any danger or suffer any after effects.

The magic mirror divinations that were strictly controlled by the Nighthawks and Mandated Punishers were those that asked evil gods or mysterious existences for help. Furthermore, the fortune-teller couldn't randomly fabricate things. Some phrases or qualities had the potential to invite the attention of unknown entities.

In the world where the powers of the Beyonders exist, such divinations would often lead to tragedy. Klein even suspected that the original Klein, Welch, and Naya had committed such a forbidden divination by following the instructions of the Antigonus family's diary.

At that moment, Hanass also explained the principle behind magic mirror divination and described the actual process.

"First, you choose a suitable time and date according to the divinity you believe in. You can decide this using the Astromancy Manual. For example, we all know that Sundays symbolize the Evernight Goddess, for Sunday is the embodiment of rest. 2 to 3 in the early morning, 9 to 10 in the morning, 4 to 5 in the evening, and 11 to midnight are all related to the moon; thus, they are controlled by the Evernight Goddess. Thus, fortune-tellers that pray

to the Evernight Goddess can use magic mirror divination during these times on a Sunday."

Quite a good foundation… Klein nodded slightly while using the half-closed door to the meeting room to conceal himself.

It had to be said that with the seven major churches keeping each other in check, some mysticism knowledge had indeed leaked. For example, many of the meanings behind the symbolism could be found in the Astromancy Manual. However, without the potions or Beyonder powers, ordinary people were unable to obtain the desired effects.

"Second, we must scrutinize the mirror carefully. It must be a mirror coated with silver. You place the mirror at the position representing the moon…" Hanass demonstrated with the prop in his hand.

No, what he needs now is spirit dowsing. First, choose a position and recite the phrase, 'This place is suitable for magic mirror divination' seven times in your head, then see which direction the pendulum turns. Clockwise for true, counter-clockwise for false… Of course, if you are asking for answers from a malicious supernatural entity, the position would not matter. Rather, it would depend on whether the entity is interested in answering your questions… Klein silently corrected him.

At this point, he felt like a teacher listening in on a lesson…

Hanass Vincent could not hear Klein's mental musings as he described the preparations in detail in a normal tone.

When the members finished taking notes, he continued explaining, "After showering, confirm that you have drawn all your curtains and locked your doors. After that, light up a candle and place it in front of the mirror before sincerely praying to the divinity you believe in. Try to keep your questions simple as there's no need for fanciful embellishment… After praying seven times, pick up your mirror and gently toss it on the ground. Make sure to be

gentle… Remember the way it shatters as that is a revelation from the gods… I will tell you the main symbolisms in a second."

Phew, this is orthodox magic mirror divination. Klein heaved a sigh of relief as he walked into the meeting room and sat back down in his previous seat. He finished the rest of his Southville coffee in one gulp.

So-called "orthodox" divination meant that it was possible to obtain revelations, but it was impossible to truly interpret it.

And for Beyonders who reached this step, they could look straight into the mirror to obtain clear information if they received a response!

As there were many potential symbolisms after the shattering, Hanass taught for a long while. He was not done even when Edward Steve returned to the room after finishing his fortune-telling.

Klein did not ask what Edward did for his fortune-telling or what method did he use since it was an unspoken rule among fortune-tellers. While acting as a Seer, he naturally had to abide by it strictly unless the other party mentioned it.

"I discovered that many a time, our interpretation is too vague, as though it's meeting different requests, allowing different people to find a description of themselves from the interpretation." Edward drank a mouthful of Sibe black tea and said with a soft sigh. "For example, those that encounter adversities and calamities will eventually see the light of hope. Heh heh, but no one knows when the light of hope will come. For example, a journey might not be very smooth-sailing, but you will definitely arrive alive. Hehe, the dead will not retort me."

As he did not listen from the beginning, he ignored Hanass's magic mirror divination class.

"Survival bias," added Klein with a smile.

Survival bias generally meant that a lot of statistics would only include those who were alive and lucky. The data would ignore the dead; therefore, the results would be clearly biased.

"Right. Emperor Roselle was really a philosopher," marveled Edward.

…Speechless, Klein raised his empty cup and pretended to take a sip.

The members were fully immersed in the study of horoscopes and magic mirror divination the entire afternoon. Occasionally, they would also discuss with Klein and Edward.

And when that happened, Klein would try his best to meet his duty as an informal member of the Nighthawks. He would try hard to steer the topic away from anything related to Beyonders or dangerous ideas.

However, he failed at the thing he wanted to do the most. A few inquirers came, but none of them picked him to do their fortune-telling.

Perhaps I have to be more proactive in entertaining them. Should I use a few phrases like 'you are plagued with bad luck,' 'you have been unlucky recently,' or 'nothing you do will happen smoothly?' No, that's nothing like a Seer… With this in mind, Klein could not help but shake his head in self-deprecation.

He picked up his cane, stood up, and left after bidding everyone farewell.

At half past five, Edward Steve put on his coat and was prepared to walk out the Divination Club when he suddenly saw a familiar figure.

"Good afternoon, Glacis. Long time no see," he greeted with a smile. He saw his friend with similar interests as him wear his usual format suit with a black bow tie. In front of his chest hung a monocle.

Immediately following that, he noticed that his friend did not look well. Even his soft blond hair looked dry.

"Good afternoon, Edward… Cough." Glacis with his hat in hand suddenly used his fist to cover his mouth as he coughed a few times.

Edward asked out of concern, "You seem to be ill?"

"A very serious illness. It even turned into pneumonia. If it wasn't for my wife who met an impressive apothecary and gave me a magical medicine, you would have probably had to visit me at the cemetery." Glacis's tone was filled with a lingering fear and joy.

"Lord, I can't believe it. You were so healthy previously. Look at you, you look so frail now! I remember when I did divination on you, there were no signs that indicated that you would get a serious illness." Edward waved his cane and said with an astonished sigh.

"My own divination had the same result as yours. Perhaps we are not qualified fortune-tellers. Besides…" Glacis suddenly recalled the happenings on Monday as his expression turned abnormally serious.

At that moment, the beautiful lady, Angelica, came over and bowed with a pleasant smile.

After exchanging greetings, she first showed concern for Glacis's health and provided some suggestions. Then, she mentioned in passing, "Mr. Glacis, Mr. Moretti, who requested your divination services previously, has joined our club as well."

"The one who got me to tell his fortune?" Glacis's eyes lit up immediately. "Lord, where is he?"

"He just left." Angelica and Edward were unable to comprehend Glacis's abnormal reaction.

Glacis took two steps in agitation and said, "The next time he comes, please ask him when he will come if I'm not around!"

"Glacis, what happened? Did that Mr. Klein Moretti do something to you?" asked Edward in puzzlement.

Glacis raised his arm and stared straight into Edward's and Angelica's probing gazes. He said in excitement, "He's a very, very, very magical…”

He lowered his arm and said after using "very" thrice, "Doctor!"

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CHAPTER 50
OLD NEIL'S METHOD OF REPAYMENT

Half past seven in the evening, around the Moretti family's dining table.

"Klein, why do you need to be at work so early as a consultant? Would emergency matters at the security company be more dangerous?" Benson forked a potato from a dish of potato-stewed beef as he raised the matter in concern.

Klein carefully spat out the bones from a pan-fried fish and gave his prepared answer.

"A batch of historical documents needed immediate shipping to Backlund. I had to be present to handle the handover and make sure there was nothing missing. As you can guess, the bunch of fist-swinging bastards don't know any Feysac."

Upon hearing his answer, Benson, who had finished chewing his food, could not help but sigh.

"Knowledge is truly important."

Making use of this opportunity, Klein took out the remaining five-pound note and handed it to Benson.

"This is my additional payment I received today. It's time you get some decent clothes too."

"Five pounds?" Benson and Melissa said in unison.

Benson took the note and looked at it repeatedly. He said in both shock and doubt, "This security company sure is generous…”

His weekly salary was one pound ten soli, which meant six pounds exactly every four weeks. He only earned one additional pound from this additional payment!

And with that salary, he had managed to support his siblings, giving them a decent place to stay and allowing them to eat meat two to three times a week. Every year, they could get a few new clothes!

"Are you doubting me?" Klein deliberately returned with a question.

Benson chuckled. "I doubt you have the ability nor the guts to rob a bank."

"You aren't someone who can lie," Melissa answered seriously after lowering her fork and knife.

I-I'm now someone used to lying… Klein immediately felt a little ashamed.

Although it was a result of the circumstances of his reality, his sister's belief in him left him melancholic.

"It was relatively urgent and important today. I also played a crucial role… which is the reason for the five pounds," Klein explained.

In a way, what he said was the truth.

As for the five pounds that he would be reimbursed with—the one he would use to join the Divination Club—he planned on concealing it. Firstly, if he brought five pounds home again, he would truly scare his siblings, making them suspect he was doing something illegal. Secondly, he had to save to buy additional materials to practice being a Seer and to grasp more mysticism knowledge.

Benson bit off a mouthful of wheat bread in satisfaction and thought for more than ten seconds.

"The work I'm at doesn't need any decent clothes. Well, to be precise, the clothes at home are sufficient."

Without waiting for Klein to persuade him, he suggested, "With this additional income, we would truly have savings. I plan on buying a few books on accountancy and studying. Klein, Melissa, I do not wish that my weekly salary remain below two pounds in five years. Heh, as you know, my boss and manager have shit for brains. Their mouths stink the moment they open them."

"Excellent idea," agreed Klein. He also took the opportunity to steer the conversation. "Why don't you read some of the grammar books in my room? To be truly dignified and to earn a handsome pay, that's something rather critical."

Perhaps, in the times to come, the civil servant examinations will appear in Loen Kingdom. Preparing ahead of time would give him the advantage…

Benson's eyes lit up when he heard that.

"I've indeed forgotten about that. Here, let's toast to a beautiful future."

He did not drink rye beer. Instead, he poured clear oyster soup into three cups and clinked his cup with his siblings'.

After drinking the clear soup, he looked at his sister who was wrestling with the pan-fried fish. He chuckled and said, "Aside from Benson's books, I think Melissa needs a new dress too."

Melissa looked up and shook her head incessantly.

"No, I think it's best…”

"To save it up." Klein finished the sentence for her.

"Yeah." Melissa nodded in agreement.

"In fact, if you do not seek the best fabrics and the newest designs, it would not be too expensive. We can save up the remaining money," said Klein in a manner which did not allow for disagreement.

Benson added, "Melissa, are you planning on wearing the old dress again to Selena's sixteenth birthday bash?"

Selena Wood was Melissa's classmate and good friend. She came from quite a good family background. Her elder brother was a practicing solicitor and her father was a senior employee of Backlund Bank's Tingen branch.

However, the so-called bash was only a dinner invitation to friends where they chatted and played cards.

"Alright." Melissa lowered her head and mumbled a response. Then, she ruthlessly forked a piece of stewed beef.

After a short silence, she suddenly recalled something and looked up abruptly.

"Mrs. Shaud from next door got her maidservant to send a calling card over. She wishes to make a formal visit on Sunday, at four in the afternoon tomorrow. She wants to get to know her new neighbors."

"Mrs. Shaud?" Klein looked at his siblings, confounded.

Benson rapped the side of the table with his fingers and appeared to be thinking.

"Mrs. Shaud from 4 Daffodil Street? I met her husband before. He's a senior solicitor."

"Senior solicitor… Perhaps he knows Selena's brother," said Melissa with some hints of delight.

We are at 2 Daffodil Street.… Klein nodded slightly.

"It's imperative we get to know our neighbors, but as you know, I still have to be at the company on Sunday. I only have time off on Monday. Please pass my apologies to Mrs. Shaud."

With that said, he suddenly recalled the neighbors of his former life when he was young, as well as the neighbors in the apartment from Iron Cross Street. He was amused as he sighed lightly.

"To have formal visits… Shouldn't neighbors get to know each other through natural interaction?"

"Haha, Klein, that's because you aren't aware. You have read a lot of newspapers recently, but you have not broached the magazines catered towards families and middle-aged women. They placed families with an annual income of a hundred to a thousand pounds as middle-class. They promoted it as the framework of the entire kingdom and praised how the middle-class doesn't have the arrogance of the aristocrats and the wealthy, nor are they as crass as the low-income brackets."

Benson lightly and happily explained, "These magazines impart many simplified ceremonies which the aristocrats practice in their interactions. As such, it becomes a target of the middle-class. Thus, this results in the differences between intimate calls, semi-formal calls, and formal calls."

As he spoke, he shook his head and chuckled.

"Typically, gentlemen, madams, and ladies who view themselves in this class will be very particular about details. They will visit their neighbors and friends from two to six in the afternoon. It's known as a morning call 1."

"Morning call?" Klein and Melissa asked in surprise.

Why was a visit from two to six in the afternoon a morning call?

Benson put down his fork and knife, threw his hands up, and smiled.

"I do not know why either. All I did was read the magazines my female colleague brought. Yeah, perhaps it's because they wear their morning gowns to make the call…”

Morning gowns were a form of formal attire worn during Mass or gatherings. Later, it was considered as formal attire for the day, different from the formal attire for evening functions.

"Alright. Remember to buy some good coffee powder and tea leaves in the afternoon. Buy some muffins and lemon egg tarts from Mrs. Smyrin. We must not ill-treat our neighbors." Klein chuckled as he dipped his remaining bread into the meat sauces, grabbed some potato and put it into his mouth.

…

The next morning was a Sunday morning.

Klein finished the last mouthful of inferior tea, put down the newspapers, and wore his halved top hat. Picking up his silver-inlaid black cane, he sauntered out the door and took a public carriage to Zouteland Street.

He greeted Rozanne who was planning to sleep in the break room after finishing her night duty. After which, he went all the way down to the basement.

After turning a corner, he met a Nighthawk member, Sleepless Royale Reideen.

She looked like a cold lady. Her brows were long and slender, sitting atop large eyes. Her hair was a silky-smooth black.

"Good morning, Madam Reideen," Klein greeted with a smile.

Royale used her deep blue eyes to glance at him and nodded indiscernibly in return.

The two quickly passed by each other when Royale stopped and said with her eyes trained forward, "Ritualistic magic is a very dangerous thing."

Ah.… Klein was taken aback. By the time he turned around, all he saw was her departing back.

"Thank you." He frowned and shouted at Royale Reideen's back.

After taking a left band, he quickly met Old Neil inside the armory, as well as Bredt who should not have been there.

"Let's go to my place. I've already received the corresponding materials. Bredt has agreed to watch the armory for me," said Old Neil with a chuckle.

Klein was immediately surprised.

"We aren't doing it here?"

Old Neil held a silver chest and tutted.

"There's no space here to practice ritualistic magic."

Klein did not ask further. He followed Old Neil up to the streets and took a public carriage to the North Borough's suburbs.

Old Neil's place was a bungalow. The garden in front of it was filled with roses, gold mint, and other "materials."

The moment he entered, there was a carpeted foyer. There were two high-back chairs and an umbrella rack.

Through the foyer was an expansive living room. The walls were plastered with light-colored wallpaper. The floors were a dark brown color. In the middle of the room was a tiny carpet with floral imprints and placed above it was a heavy round table.

Surrounding the table were comfortable long benches, single-seaters, and a piano.

"My deceased wife loved music." Old Neil pointed at the piano and mentioned in passing, "The sofa and coffee table are in the bedrooms… Let's do the ritualistic magic in the living room."

"Alright," Klein replied cautiously.

After Old Neil put down the silver chest, he laughed and said, "Let me demonstrate to you ritualistic magic. Make sure to observe and remember the ritual."

As he spoke, he took out a fake goatskin parchment from the chest. It was specially made and it had strange pictures drawn on it with black ink that exuded a serene fragrance.

Klein kept watching and finally discovered that Old Neil was seemingly, likely, possibly drawing an IOU!

When Old Neil filled in the corresponding field with the number "30" and the corresponding "£" symbol, Klein could not help but ask out of puzzlement and confusion, "Mr. Neil, what kind of ritualistic magic are you doing?"

Old Neil coughed and answered very seriously, "I'll be using magic to settle that debt of thirty pounds today."

You can do that? Klein's eyes widened as his mouth gaped.

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CHAPTER 51
THE GROUNDED RITUALISTIC MAGIC

Using magic to settle an IOU?

Is he trying to curse his debtor to death or create counterfeit notes?

I might not have a solution to the problem, but I can finish you instead?

…

All sorts of thoughts appeared in Klein's mind as he looked at Old Neil oddly.

He seriously considered the possibility of calling the cops, no—of informing the Nighthawks.

Old Neil shot a glance at him and said peeved, "I can see ignorance, foolishness, and the weak and shameless disbelief in your eyes. Didn't Dunn tell you the maxim of the Mystery Pryers? Do as you wish but do no harm!"

Although this maxim originated from the secret and evil Moses Ascetic Order organization, Beyonders who choose the path of Moses Ascetic Order have proven that it's right through their own experiences. As long as one strictly abides to it and shows the needed fear and reverence, the risk of losing control will be minimized. The contrary has similarly been established.

"Your suspicion towards me is an insult to Mystery Pryers!"

"Sorry." Klein did not hesitate to apologize.

He had indeed forgotten that Dunn Smith had once mentioned the maxim.

Old Neil was not truly angry. In a blink of an eye, he chuckled.

"A pity. Very few Beyonders choose to be Seers. There is no corresponding maxim to help you."

But I have Emperor Roselle's diaries… Yes, strictly abiding to the maxim has a hint of "acting…" Klein suddenly came to this thought as he nodded as if in deep thought.

Old Neil did not continue. He removed the vases and other items from the round table and placed them in a corner.

Immediately following that, he took out both a crimson red and black candle from the silver chest. He explained, "If ordinary people attempt ritualistic magic, they have to follow the results from astromancy or read corresponding manuals. They have to choose suitable dates and times. For example, the day representing the Goddess—the period when She rules over the moon. But for us Beyonders, especially Beyonders good in this domain, there's no need for that. Our acute spiritual perception and potent Astral Projections are key.

"Of course, if you are not confident about the ritualistic magic you are attempting, it's best to choose a suitable date and time. It can increase the probability of success.

"Ah right. This is based on a premise. Remember carefully to abide strictly by the rules!"

Old Neil placed two candles and turned to the side and looked at Klein, saying very solemnly, "Low-Sequence Beyonders are not strong enough. Almost all the ritualistic magic they can perform are the seeking of external powers and help. Therefore, you can only consider orthodox divinities like

the Goddess or the Lord of Storms. Absolutely— absolutely do not attempt to communicate with the unknown or unpredictable existences. Even if people believe in them or the promises recorded are filled with enticements!

"Believe me, don't take any chances. As long as you attempt once, you will go down a slippery slope into the abyss with no return. Any work or resistance will only slow it down with no way to change the trajectory."

"I'll remember!" Klein said in a deep voice. However, he felt a little afraid.

My luck enhancement ritual has apparently sought power from an unknown and unpredictable existence…

Furthermore, I have gained powers capable of pulling people into the fog that even a senior Beyonder like the Hanged Man finds unbelievable. Well… At least I think he is a senior Beyonder…

Thankfully, I haven't gone mad or have any signs of losing control…

While worrying over this, he proactively changed the subject.

"So, Nighthawks should seek the help of the Goddess?"

"No one will stop you if you pray to the Lord of Storms. However, we are unable to tell from our ritualistic magic whether He replies with malicious intent or not. The outcome will be distorted in unpredictable ways." Old Neil successfully made Klein give up the idea in a joking manner.

There was no so-called "best," only "necessary!"

After his exhortations, Old Neil picked up a crimson red candle and said, "By using candles made of moon flowers and dark-red sandalwood, it will represent the Goddess's identity as Lady of Crimson in the ritualistic magic."

He pointed to the black candles and said, "Candles made of night vanilla and slumber flowers represent the night."

As he spoke, he placed the black candle on the top left end of the round table while the red candle was placed on the top right end.

"Why do we symbolize the Goddess with only two candles? She is also the Mother of the Secrets, Empress of Disaster and Horror, and Mistress of Calm and Silence."

Old Neil chuckled.

"That's right. This is something I wished you asked.

"Before their fall, the Moses Ascetic Order had a very good relationship with the Church. Their beliefs and results on ritualistic magic have heavily influenced us.

"They believe that all objects are numeric. Every number has a spirituality and in ritualistic magic, 0 represents the unknown or Chaos. It symbolizes the state of the universe before it was born. 1 represents a beginning, the first Creator. 2 represents the world and various divinities that were produced from His body. 3 represents contact between divinities and material objects to create all things. Here, using two candles represents the Goddess while the third candle is for you.

"Which two candles and which two symbols to have depend on the intended effects the of ritualistic magic."

Three begets all things [1] *? All things stem from three?* Klein could not help but recall certain things from his previous life.

Seeing Klein listen attentively, Old Neil took a third candle and said, "This is the candle representing 'me.' It's a very ordinary candle which only has a little bit of mint added. Take note that plants like roses, lemons, mint, moon

flower, night vanilla, and slumber flower are beloved and cherished by the Goddess.

"Viewing it from another angle, the three candles represent the bodies, spiritualities and godhood of every person."

After finishing the description, Old Neil placed the third candle in the middle of the round table.

He then took out a bottle of concocted "Full Moon Essence Oil," a huge cauldron engraved with the Dark Sacred Emblem, a silver knife with gorgeous patterns, a cup of water, and a saucer of coarse salt.

"To Beyonders who are not good at ritualistic magic, there is a need for bells, crystal balls, silver cups, incense or other supplementary items. However, Mystery Pryers and Seers have no need for that. These artifacts are already sufficient."

Old Neil placed the fake goatskin parchment with the IOU just below the cauldron and used a special quill to hold down one corner.

He turned to Klein and said, "Ritualistic magic needs a clean spiritual environment where you will not be disturbed. And that requires us to create it. The steps are to first enter Cogitation. Focus your mind and with the supplementary items, draw out our strength, and construct it around us. For example, Ray Bieber's house had used Holy Night Powder while I'll be using a ritual silver dagger.

"Throughout the entire process, we have to go according to the outcome we desire to confirm the symbolism and corresponding incantation. Incantations are best done in Hermes because ancient Hermes stemmed from Nature. It's akin to ancient Dragonish and ancient Elvish. The effects are very direct, lacking the necessary concealment and protection. It easily causes the caster to fall into danger. This is also why it has been modified. However, it's more effective.

"Alright, I have to focus on the ritualistic magic. I won't explain things to you any further. Pay attention by watching and listening. Remember any problems and ask me when everything is done."

"Alright." Klein took two steps back and trained his eyes on Old Neil.

Old Neil's eyes rapidly darkened as invisible wind around him spun.

He was silent for a moment, going from left to right, then up to down, using his psyche to cause friction and consecutively light up the three candles.

Following that, he picked up the silver knife and stabbed it into the coarse salt. Then, he chanted in Hermes:

"I sanctify you, blade of pure silver!

"I cleanse and purify you, allowing you to serve me in this ritual!

…

"In the name of the Evernight Goddess, the Lady of Crimson…

"You have been sanctified!"

After a short but powerful syllable, Old Neil drew a silver knife and inserted it into a cup of clear water. Then, he raised it and pointed to the space beyond the round table.

He aimed the blade tip in the periphery and took a step forward, circling the round table. Every step he took made Klein feel an invisible energy spew out of the silver knife. It was filled with spirituality as it connected with the air, forming a completely sealed wall.

After walking one round, the altar was completely isolated from its surroundings.

Old Neil stood in front of the round table and put the silver knife down. He picked up the bottle of Full Moon Essence Oil and dripped three drops on the black, dark red, and ordinary candles.

Sizzle!

A thin mist emanated as everything seemed to become veiled in mystery.

Old Neil put down the glass bottle and looked at the fake goatskin parchment silently for two minutes. Then, he picked up the quill and drew a mark he controlled—a square that framed all the content, indicating that he was in control of the debt.

Following that, he drew another 'cross,' indicating that it was canceled.

Upon reaching this step, he picked up the parchment with one hand and tapped his glabella with the other to activate his Spirit Vision.

Another invisible and exuberant energy bloomed as Old Neil whispered a chant:

"I pray for the power of the dark night.

"I pray for the power of the crimson.

"I pray for the Goddess's loving grace.

"Please provide me with the funds to pay this IOU.

"Night vanilla, an herb that belongs to the red moon, please bestow your powers to my incantation!"

"Moon flower, an herb that belongs to the red moon, please bestow your powers to my incantation!"

…

Klein was completely flabbergasted listening from the side. All sorts of thoughts arose in him.

Such an incantation can work?

Although it was recited from written Hermes…

Isn't this way too simple and down to earth?

Wouldn't the Goddess be angry and multiply the debt severalfold?

At that moment, the candlelight lit up suddenly!

After Old Neil finished his incantation, he closed his eyes for two minutes. He picked up the Full Moon Essence Oil and dripped one drop onto each of the three candles.

Immediately following that, he grabbed the parchment and pulled it close to the candle representing "me." When it ignited, he immediately threw it into the cauldron.

Old Neil closed his eyes again as he seemed to sense the burning of the IOU.

He opened his eyes after a moment and looked toward the black Sacred Emblem on the cauldron. The parchment was already completely incinerated.

"Praise the Lady!" Old Neil tapped his chest in four spots, forming the shape of the crimson moon. Then, he extinguished the candles in the opposite order as he lit them.

After finishing everything, he used the silver knife to rip apart the invisible wall around him.

A huge wind stirred immediately as Old Neil heaved a sigh of relief.

"It's done."

"That's it?" Klein asked in a daze. "Has the IOU been settled? How?"

"I don't know either. Anyways, it will be settled in a reasonable manner," said Old Neil with a smile as he threw up his hands.

This… Klein was unsure what expression or words to use as a response.

Isn't this a little unreliable?

1. This is a Daoism saying: Dao begets One, One begets Two, Two begets Three, Three begets all things.

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CHAPTER 52
SPECTATOR

"Stop thinking about the bloody IOU. Let's discuss the ritualistic magic." Old Neil put away the candles, cauldron, silver knife, and other items with a relaxed expression.

Klein really wanted to shrug his shoulders like the Americans in his previous life, but ultimately could not bring himself to do something that ungentlemanly.

He turned his focus toward the ritualistic magic and threw out detailed questions that puzzled him, receiving answers from them. For example, the incantations had a particular format. As long as they were satisfied and the key meaning was expressed in Hermes, the rest could be left to one's creativity. Of course, blasphemy or disrespectful descriptions were absolutely forbidden.

The mysticism class lasted until noon before Old Neil coughed twice.

"We have to return to Zouteland Street."

With that said, he grumbled in an indistinct manner, "To get these bloody materials, I missed my beloved breakfast."

Klein looked around both amused and puzzled.

"Mr. Neil, do you have a chef? Or a maidservant in charge of cooking?"

A weekly salary of twelve pounds could hire several servants!

According to the newspapers, with board and lodging provided, hiring an ordinary chef cost anywhere between twelve to fifteen soli a week. It did not even need a pound. A maidservant to do miscellaneous chores was even cheaper. Their weekly salaries ranged between three soli six pence to six soli. Of course, one could not bear any hope of them having any culinary skills.

Uh, that's not right. With Mr. Neil's debt of thirty pounds, it's only normal he doesn't hire any chefs or servants…

It seems I've asked another question I should not have asked…

While Klein regretted his question, Old Neil shook his head without minding it.

"I often attempt ritualistic magic, research extraordinary items, and read corresponding documents at home, so I don't nor is it possible that I hire ordinary people as chefs, butlers or maidservants. I only hire someone to clean up the place regularly. And if they are not ordinary people, do you think they will be willing to do such jobs?"

"I seem to have asked a silly question. It's possibly because I will not do anything that involves mysticism at home," explained Klein in a self-deprecating manner.

Old Neil had long stood up, wore his round felt hat, and while walking out the door, rambled on.

"I seem to smell pan-fried foie gras… Once the IOU is completely settled, I'll definitely have one set! For lunch, I'll definitely eat roasted pork glazed with apple juices. No, that's not enough. I must have a sausage infused with mashed potatoes…"

You are making me hungry… Klein swallowed his saliva as he caught up to Old Neil and headed for the nearby public carriage stop.

After returning to Zouteland Street, Old Neil suddenly grunted after stepping down the carriage.

"What do I see? Goddess, what am I seeing?"

He was suddenly as nimble as a seventeen or eighteen-year-old lad. He quickly came to the roadside and picked up an item.

Klein leaned close out of curiosity and looked carefully. He realized it was a wallet with fine workmanship.

With his lack of experience, he could barely tell if the dark brown wallet was made of buffalo skin or sheepskin, but he noticed a small light-blue logo embroidered on the side of the wallet—a white dove spreading its wings as if ready to take off.

That was Klein's first impression. The second thing he noticed was the stack of paper notes in the bulging wallet.

There were more than twenty gray notes imprinted with black ink—gold pounds!

Old Neil opened up the wallet and pulled out the notes. When he looked at it carefully, he immediately chuckled.

"Ten-pound notes. The honorable Founder and Protector, William I. Wow, Goddess, there's a total of thirty notes. There's also a few five-pound notes, one-pound and five-soli notes."

More than three hundred pounds? That's a huge amount of money in every meaning of the word! I might not even earn that much in ten years… Klein's breathing turned heavy involuntarily.

As the amount of gold pounds was immense, picking up such a wallet was equivalent to picking up a briefcase of banknotes in his previous life.

"I wonder which gentleman dropped it… He can't be someone ordinary," analyzed Klein calmly.

Such a wallet was clearly not a woman's.

"There's no need to care who he is," said Old Neil with a chuckle. "It's not like we attempted to divine and take money that doesn't belong to us. We should wait here for a moment. I believe the gentleman will soon be back searching for it. It's not something that can be given up no matter who it is."

Klein heaved a sigh of relief. He had a brand-new understanding of Old Neil's morals.

He was rather worried that he would have used the Goddess's bestowment as an excuse and paid off his debt. He was still wondering how to prevent it and persuade him otherwise.

Is this "do as you wish, but do no harm?" Klein suddenly learned something new.

The duo did not wait more than a minute by the streets when a luxurious four-wheeled carriage zoomed over. Its side had a light blue logo with a dove spreading its wings.

The carriage stopped, and a middle-aged man dressed in a black formal suit with a bow tie of the same color alighted. He looked at the wallet, took off his hat, and said politely, "Sirs, that should be my master's wallet."

"Your logo is proof of everything, but I need to make additional verifications. This is to be responsible for all parties. Might I ask how much money is there in the wallet?" replied Old Neil politely.

The middle-aged man was taken aback as he said in a self-deprecating manner almost immediately, "As a butler, I do not know how much money Master had in his wallet. Sorry. Please permit me to ask."

"As you wish." Old Neil gestured for him to do as he pleased.

The middle-aged man walked to the carriage's side and through the window, conversed with the person within.

He approached Klein and Old Neil again and smiled.

"More than 300 pounds, but less than 350 pounds. My master does not remember the exact number."

Does not remember… That's really some filthy rich guy. If I had that much money on me, I would definitely be counting it again and again… Klein was filled with envy.

Old Neil nodded and handed the wallet back.

"With the Goddess as proof, this belongs to you."

The middle-aged man took the wallet over and did an estimate before pulling out three ten-pound notes.

"My master is Sir Deweyville. He wishes to commend your morals. This is what an honest person should receive. Please do not reject it."

Sir Deweyville? The one who established the Deweyville Trust? The Sir Deweyville who provided cheap rental apartments to the working class? Klein immediately remembered the name.

He was a knight that his brother respected but did not believe was grounded in reality.

"Thank you, Sir Deweyville. He is a kind and generous gentleman." Old Neil did not stand on ceremony as he received the three notes.

After watching Sir Deweyville's carriage depart, he turned to look at Klein when he saw that there was no one around. He flicked the notes and

chuckled.

"Thirty pounds. The IOU is settled.

"I said it will be settled in a reasonable manner.

"This is the power of magic."

…*Holy f**king power of magic! That actually works!?* Klein was once again flabbergasted.

A few minutes later, he entered the building's stairwell and while heading to the security company, he asked puzzledly, "Mr. Neil, why didn't you ask for more money?"

"Do not be greedy. One must take care not to be greedy when doing ritualistic magic. Temperance is a critical trait needed by every Mystery Pryer if they wish to live long," explained Old Neil happily.

…

In a huge ballroom, candles were burning on a few chandeliers, emitting a fragrance that soothed the minds of people. By the sheer number of candles, they produced a light in no way inferior to that of gas lamps.

There were long tables with pan-fried foie gras, grilled steak, roasted chicken, fried tonguefish, Desi oysters, mutton stew, cream soup, and other delicacies. In addition, there were bottles of Mist Champagne, Aurmir grape wine, and Southville red wine. They were all glistening with a tempting glow under the light.

Servants in red vests carried trays with crystal cups and shuttled between the gentlemen and ladies dressed both elegantly or gorgeously.

Audrey Hall was wearing a collared, high-waisted, pale-white dress with engageantes. Her corset was tightly fitted, while her voluminous layers

were puffed up perfectly with a cage crinoline.

Her long blond hair was coiled up in an elegant bun and the earrings, necklace, and rings she wore sparkled brightly. At her feet were a pair of white dancing shoes that were stitched with roses and diamonds.

How many petticoats am I even wearing? Five? Six? Wearing white-silk gloves, Audrey caressed her crinoline gently with her right hand.

Her left hand was holding a glass of clear champagne.

Audrey was nothing like her usual self, usually placing herself center-stage of banquets and making her the focus of attention. Instead, she avoided the bustle and quietly stood in the shadows of hanging curtains by the French windows.

She took a sip of champagne as she watched the crowd as though she did not belong.

Count Wolf's youngest son is chatting with Viscount Conrad's daughter. He likes to move his forearm to reinforce what he says. Hmm, the bigger the movement of his forearm, the more unbelievable his words. That is something gleaned from experience… He can't stop trying to elevate himself by putting other people down. However, he can't help but feel guilty. It can be seen by the way he talks and his body language…

Duchess Della has repeatedly covered her mouth while laughing with her left hand today. Ah, I see. She is showing off her pure ocean-blue sapphire…

Her husband, Duke Negan, is discussing the current situation with a few Conservative nobles. Since the banquet began, he has searched for Duchess Della once…

They almost never make eye contact. Maybe they aren't as in love as they pretend to be…

Baron Larry has made Madam Parnes laugh seven times. That's very normal, nothing strange about it, but why does she look at her husband with guilty eyes? Oh, they have gone their separate ways… That's not right, the directions they are headed leads to the garden…

…

In the extravagant banquet, Audrey saw many details she never noticed in the past.

There was an instant where she nearly believed that she was watching an opera.

Everyone is a good opera actor… She sighed silently as her eyes remained limpid.

At that moment, she suddenly sensed something and turned her head. She cast her gaze onto a dark corner in the large balcony outside.

In the shadows was a huge golden retriever sitting there silently. She was looking inside at Audrey while half her body was hidden in the darkness.

Susie… The corners of Audrey's mouth twitched as her expression instantly changed. She could no longer maintain her state as a Spectator.

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CHAPTER 53
LISTENER

An ancient three-masted sailboat was navigating through a tumultuous storm in the sea.

It was not fast and its displacement was lacking. With the weather and the sea looking like a cataclysmic scene, the sailboat was like a withered leaf separated from its tree. However, regardless of how the typhoons rampaged or how terrifying the waves were, it continued sailing peacefully without any signs of tilting.

Alger Wilson stood on the empty deck as he looked at the massive waves that resembled mountains. His thoughts were a mystery.

It's going to be Monday again… he muttered silently to himself.

It was the day belonging to Mother Earth, the beginning of a series of waxing and waning.

However, it meant something different to Alger. It belonged to a mysterious existence forever enveloped in grayish-white fog.

At least I haven't been reduced to a madman… He stopped looking around as he gave a self-deprecating chuckle.

At this moment, one of the only few sailors he had leaned over and asked reverently, "Your Grace, where are we setting course for this time?"

Alger surveyed his surroundings and said in calm voice, "Pursue the Listener from the Aurora Order."

…

The storm subsided as mist emanated. On a strange sailboat with cannons on board, an eight or nine-year-old boy with soft yellow hair was looking at pirates around him in fear. They were disorderly—some enjoyed barrels of beer, some swung around with ropes, others mocked each other, and some even fought with their fists.

He turned to look at a black-robed man standing in the shadows. He suppressed his voice and asked, "Father, where are we going?"

Five days ago was his first time seeing his father, a father who proclaimed to be an adventurer.

If not for the oil painting his late mother left him that confirmed his father's identity and the fact that the orphanage had opened its doors to him, he was absolutely unwilling to leave his hometown and follow his only kin who was also nearly a stranger.

The man in the shadows lowered his head and looked at his son. With an amiable expression, he answered, "Jack, I'm bringing you to a holy place, a holy residence where the Creator once lived."

"Is that the Kingdom of God? We mortals can only enter by winning His grace…" Jack had been well-educated by his mother and knew this much. He was both surprised and fearful about the matter.

Standing in the shadows, the man had an unforgettable jawline as though he was a sculpture chiseled by the best artisan.

He placed his hand to his ear and made a listening pose. He replied in a tone that sounded like sleep-talking, "Jack, mortals are a wrong concept. The Creator created this world and He is everywhere. He exists in every living being. Therefore, all beings have godhood. Once the godhood attains a particular level, they can become an angel. The seven fake gods at present are only powerful angels.

"Look, I can now hear the teachings of the Creator. Ah, how extraordinary is this revelation! Life is only a tour of the spirit. When the spirit is sufficiently potent and resilient, we can find our godhood and fuse with even more godhoods…”

Jack could not understand the complicated description. He shook his head and asked another question he previously did not have the chance to.

"Father, I heard from Mother than after the Creator created this world, He split into all beings and does not exist in actuality. Then, why does His holy residence exist?"

As a seven to eight-year-old child, he was logical.

The man with the chiseled face was taken aback. He turned his head away as though he was listening to more murmurings.

Suddenly, he slumped down, knees on the deck. His exposed skin protruded black shards.

He clenched his head with both hands as his expression warped and he shouted in extreme pain, "They are lying!"

…

After lunch, having had Old Neil promise him that he would bring him to the underground market the next time he went, Klein slowly returned to the Blackthorn Security Company. He chose the two options of reading the documents in the staff office and practicing his abilities or take the opportunity to go out and act as a Seer in the Divination Club before Captain Dunn stopped him.

However, before he could make the decision, he saw Dunn Smith walk in. He was dressed in the usual black windbreaker and halved top hat.

"Captain, any updates?" Klein thought of the whereabouts of the Antigonus family's notebook as he asked with concern.

Without showing any signs of fatigue in his gray eyes, Dunn said, "The facts have corroborated that the Antigonus family's notebook is in Ray Bieber's hands. However, he has vanished completely.

"I have already informed the various Nighthawk teams of this matter through a telegram. They were requested to pay attention to the various piers and steam locomotive stations. The first batch of printed portraits was mailed out yesterday afternoon and will be printed in various major newspapers."

How nice it would be if there were phones, fax machines, surveillance cameras, and big data… What a pity. I know how to use all of them and even understand a little of the logic behind it… Klein exhaled silently.

"But regardless, we can consider ourselves as having found the notebook. And this is all thanks to you. Of course, it still needs another round of confirmations. I have already sent a telegram to the Backlund diocese, requesting them to escort Sealed Artifact 2-049 here. It was once a dangerous item of the Antigonus family. It can help us know if Ray Bieber is a descendant of the Antigonus family."

A Grade 2 Sealed Artifact… Dangerous… They can be used with care and moderation. Klein had originally wanted to ask about the Sealed Artifact, its special abilities, and the danger it posed out of curiosity, but he instantly recalled that he lacked the necessary clearance. He had no choice but to give up.

"May Goddess bless us." Klein tapped four spots on his chest, forming the sign of the full moon.

Dunn pushed open the door to his office and said with a slight nod, "The Goddess has always been protecting us. Klein, if you had not chosen Seer, you would be a formal member after this matter is verified. You could have

chosen Sleepless, but pity… To be frank, I'm still puzzled over your choice. Although Corpse Collector is quite off-putting, you have seen Daly as well. You should know that Spirit Mediums vary in strength. As for Mystery Pryers, they're a good choice too. At the very least, you have Old Neil as a role model, so he will make sure the risk of losing control is minimized."

With regards to this question, Klein had prepared an answer from the beginning. He just never had a chance to use it since Dunn did not ask. He was only able to answer in passing.

He organized his words and said, "My considerations stem from the fact that Seers and Mystery Pryers are considered Beyonders with a support role. They do not need to always face enemies for that's too dangerous. And both you and Old Neil said that in the domain of mystery and Beyonders, curiosity and experimentation usually brings about terrifying outcomes. Describing Mystery Pryers as prying mysteries made me worried, so… Heh, as you know, I was only an ordinary graduate not long ago. A lack of guts is the only reason I made such a choice."

"I have to say that this is a very reasonable answer that goes beyond my expectations." Dunn massaged his temples and chuckled.

He turned halfway as his gray eyes sized up Klein.

"Continue going out for now. Do not limit yourself to the paths leading from Welch's place to Iron Cross Street. Perhaps you might sense the notebook and help us confirm Ray Bieber's location."

"Alright." Klein realized that he no longer need to be in a dilemma.

He bade Dunn farewell and turned around, his heart beginning to count.

Three, two…

"Hold on," shouted Dunn.

Klein turned his head and smiled.

"Captain, is there anything else?"

Dunn coughed slightly and said, "Well, support Beyonders have to fight their enemies from time to time. Although Seers sound like they can avoid such battles, they are not to be ignored. You have to maintain your shooting skills and work on increasing your strength."

"This is what I'm working hard towards." Klein pointed outside. "I'll be leaving."

"Alright. Uh, wait a moment." Dunn shouted for him once more. As he pondered, he said, "Perhaps I have to consider hiring a combat trainer for you. Of course, this matter is under the premise that you become a formal member."

Klein responded tersely before asking carefully, "Captain, is there anything else?"

"No." Seeing Klein's unbelieving eyes, Dunn shook his head and smiled. He emphasized again, "Really, nothing."

Only then did Klein walk past the partition divider. He bade farewell to Rozanne and Mrs. Orianna and headed to the Shooting Club for practice.

With all of this done, he went to the Divination Club and saw the beautiful Angelica sitting there reading magazines leisurely.

"Home"…Klein silently read. With the cane in hand, he walked over and greeted with a smile,

"Good afternoon, Madam Angelica."

"Good afternoon, Mr. Moretti." In no rush, Angelica put down her magazine. She stood up and said, "Not long after you left yesterday, Mr.

Glacis came. He just recovered from a major illness."

Klein heaved a sigh of relief as he smiled.

"That sure is something worth celebrating."

Upon hearing this, Angelica, who was secretly observing him, lowered her voice and asked out of curiosity,

"Mr. Glacis said that you are a very, very, very magical doctor. Are you?"

What? Klein looked at the lady in front of him, suspecting if he was hearing things.

What made him think I'm a doctor?

Even I do not know…

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CHAPTER 54
THE FIRST DIVINATION REQUESTER

Upon seeing Klein's odd expression, Angelica immediately felt her beliefs waver.

"Is that so? Mr. Glacis mentioned that you were able to tell of an ailment in his lungs simply from observation…”

Her voice softened until she finally shut up.

Observation? A dark glabella? Klein was instantly enlightened as he shook his head with a chortle.

"I believe Mr. Glacis was mistaken."

He was planning on being perfunctory, but after recalling that no one sought his divination services the entire afternoon yesterday, his mind whirled. It affected his goal of acting as a Seer, so he explained, "It's actually a form of divination."

"Divination? But Mr. Glacis only mentioned that you observed his face. That's also considered divination?" asked Angelica in shock and doubt.

Klein smiled, composed.

"As a member of the Divination Club, you should know about palm-reading, right?"

Palm-reading was not patented by the Foodaholic Empire. Even on Earth, India and old Europe had developed similar principles, much less in a world with Beyonder powers.

"I know about it, but it seems you did not read his palm? Were you observing him in secret?" asked Angelica curiously.

"I was using face-reading." Klein cooked up a lie. "Its principles aren't very different from palm-reading at a fundamental level."

"Really?" Angelica's eyes were filled with disbelief.

In order to develop his career as a Seer, Klein chuckled. He pretended to be in thought as he tapped his glabella twice.

He focused his eyes and Angelica's aura presented itself. Her head was purple, her limbs were red, her throat was blue… There was no problems with her health except for some colors being duller. However, that was a manifestation of ordinary fatigue.

Klein then looked at her emotions and saw orange mixed in with some red and blue. It also meant warmth coupled with some excitement and thought.

Thankfully… After realizing that there was nothing abnormal about her, Klein planned on deactivating his Spirit Vision. But it was at that moment when he suddenly saw rich darkness hidden in the depths of her emotional colors.

Furthermore, she is lacking a little of white—an eagerness to improve… Klein nodded while in thought.

"Mr. Moretti, were you reading my face?" Seeing the young gentleman in black in front of her turn silent abruptly while seriously sizing her up, Angelica keenly noticed something. She asked in a half-curious and half-worried manner.

Klein did not immediately reply. Instead, he tapped his glabella lightly as he wore a look of scrutiny.

Just as Angelica was feeling unease, he said warmly, "Madam Angelica, there are some sorrows and pains which you should not seal in your heart."

Angelica's eyes widened as her mouth turned agape. However, she did not say a word.

She looked at Klein in his halved top hat with an apparent scholarly bearing. She heard him use a deep, comforting and warm voice to say, "You need to either go mountain climbing, a game of tennis, or perform a tragic play to exhaust your body due to exercising. Let your tears flow down uninhibited, then cry and scream. Express all those emotions.

"That will be very helpful to your health."

The moment those words entered her ears, Angelica felt like she had transformed into a statue. She stood there motionless.

She tried hard to blink as she lowered her head in a fluster, saying deeply, "Thank you for your suggestion…”

"It seems like there are many members here today?" Klein did not continue. As though he had not done any divinations prior, he turned to his side and looked to the meeting room at the end of the corridor.

"Sunday afternoon… at least fifty members…” Angelica's voice sounded a little hoarse. She only mentioned the key terms.

She paused as her vocal pace gradually returned to normal.

"Do you want tea or coffee?"

"Sibe black tea." Klein nodded slightly. He politely took off his hat and slowly walked to the meeting room.

Only when he vanished behind the door did Angelica exhale slowly.

…

The Divination Club's meeting room was very large. It was nearly twice the size of Klein's high school classroom.

In the past, only five or six members would be present, making it look extremely empty. Now, there were dozens of fortune-tellers sitting in different spots. They filled up most of the room.

Sunlight shone into the room through the few oriel windows. The members were either discussing softly among themselves or asking Hanass Vincent questions. Otherwise, they were practicing and attempting divination or drinking coffee and reading newspapers by themselves.

Such a scene made Klein feel like he was back to his schooling days on Earth. The difference was that it was noisier and more rowdy back then, without the tranquility of the meeting room.

He looked around, but he didn't see familiar faces like Glacis or Edward Steve. So, he casually picked up a divination textbook, found a corner, and started flipping through it leisurely.

Very soon, Angelica came in with a cup of tea and left it on the table before Klein.

As she was leaving quietly, she suddenly saw Mr. Moretti take out an exquisite-looking silver chain from his left sleeve. There was a chunk of pure topaz hanging on the silver chain.

What is he doing? Angelica slowed down subconsciously and focused her gaze at Klein.

Klein held the silver chain with his left hand and allowed the topaz to hang above the Sibe black tea, just short of touching the surface of the liquid.

With a serene expression, he half-closed his eyes and the atmosphere around him suddenly turned quiet.

The topaz started moving slightly, along with the special looking silver chain, in a clockwise direction.

Upon seeing this, Angelica found Mr. Moretti extremely mysterious.

"The black tea you provide is great," Klein said softly after he opened his eyes with a smile.

His actions were intentionally done for Angelica to see!

If he wanted people to select him for his divination services, Angelica's recommendation was a very crucial factor!

Since he wanted to act as a Seer, Klein no longer had any reservations. He completely personified the identity.

"Yes, Mr. Vannas is very picky about the quality of tea," Angelica said, stunned.

Klein put away his spirit pendulum by winding it properly. Then, he raised the white porcelain cup with floral design. With a smile, he gestured politely at her with his cup.

…

Angelica returned to the reception hall, but she no longer had the mood to read magazines. She sat there, gazing into the distance. It was a wonder what she was thinking about.

This continued until there were knocks on the door. She jolted awake and hurriedly looked at the entrance, only to see a lady dressed in a light-blue dress.

The lady took off her veiled hat with a powder blue ribbon. She looked calm and melancholic.

"Good afternoon, esteemed lady. Would you like to join the Divination Club, or are you looking for a divination?" Angelica asked like clockwork.

"I want a divination." The lady had a beautiful pair of eyes hidden with sorrow, and she bit her lower lip as she spoke.

Angelica guided her to the sofa and explained to her how the Divination Club worked in detail.

She picked up an album and handed it over.

"You can pick anyone."

In her low spirits, the lady flipped through the album seriously. As there were too many club members there that day, there were too many choices. It left her quite upset.

"Can you recommend one? From these few pages." She pointed at the middle section of the album, omitting the fortune-tellers priced above two soli and those below four pence.

Angelica took the album and looked at it for a few minutes. She deliberated her words before saying, "I suggest this gentleman."

The lady who looked uneasy took a glance and realized that it was a fortune-teller named "Klein Moretti."

"Mr. Moretti just joined the club… Is his divination reliable?" she asked worriedly.

Angelica nodded with great affirmation.

"Another member of the club and I are certain that Mr. Moretti is an outstanding fortune-teller. If it wasn't for his just joining the club, he wouldn't take such low fees."

"I understand." The depressed girl nodded. "I'll pick Mr. Moretti for a divination then."

"Alright, please hold on for a second." Angelica took the album and walked towards the meeting room.

She came next to Klein and said with a suppressed voice, "Mr. Moretti, someone wants you to divine for them. Which room would you like to use?"

That was effective. My first "business" is here. Klein put down his teacup and nodded calmly as he said, "Topaz room."

"Alright." Angelica walked slowly ahead of him and led him to Topaz room before opening its wooden door.

Klein sat behind the table that had various divination tools on it. He waited less than a minute before he saw a woman in a light-blue dress walk in. She looked down and melancholic.

Seizing the opportunity when she was closing the door, he tapped his glabella twice.

The yellow color in her stomach seems a little dull… The dark color of her emotions is very heavy, mainly worry and anxiety. Klein looked her over carefully and leaned backwards. He then lifted his hand to cut off his Spiritual Vision.

"Good day, Mr. Moretti." The woman in the light-blue dress sat down.

"Good afternoon, how may I address you?" Klein asked politely, not carrying much hope of getting an answer.

As a keyboard warrior, he knew that many people were not willing to use their real names during divination.

"You can call me Anna." The girl put her veiled cap aside. She looked at Klein with mixed anticipation and doubt, and said, "I would like to divine about my fiancé's situation. He traveled to the Southern Continent in March for a business deal. He sent me and his family a telegram last month on the third, saying that he was going to set sail and return. But he did not return after twenty days. At first, I believed that his delay was due to the Berserk Sea's weather, but as of today, it has been more than a month. The ship he took, the Alfalfa, still hasn't arrived at Enmat Harbor."

The ocean that separated the Northern and Southern continent was called the Berserk Sea. It was well known for natural calamities and its countless dangerous currents. If it was not for Emperor Roselle, who sent men to discover a few safer sailing routes, countries in the Northern Continent would still have yet to enter the age of colonization, let alone lay an underwater cable to complete a transoceanic telegraph.

Klein looked at his very first client of his career as a Seer and asked carefully, "Which divination method do you wish to use?"

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CHAPTER 55
REVELATION

Anna, with her beautiful eyes, hesitated for more than ten seconds.

"You can choose any type that you believe will be accurate. You are the fortune-teller, while I'm not. Of course, apart from cards, including tarot, I have also attempted studying them at home. I always felt they were more like toys or a game."

Klein thought for a moment, his wrists leaning on the edge of the table. He steepled his hands before his face, his gaze peaceful. He said softly, "Then we shall use the astrolabe."

He pointed to a fountain pen and stack of white paper on the table and said, "Write down the name of your fiancé as well as his facial features, address, and date of birth. It would be even better if you can remember the specific time he was born."

From her clothes, makeup, and demeanor, Klein did not believe that she was illiterate.

Anna did not reply. She extended her hand and took a piece of paper. She lifted the pen and dipped it in some ink. She started writing, pausing occasionally to think.

Two minutes later, she pushed the paper toward Klein.

Klein received it and turned it around. The information on the paper read: "Joyce Meyer, 15th September 1323, 2:00PM. Tingen City, East Borough, 8 Stevens Street. Short blond hair, aquiline nose…”

With just a short glance, Klein quickly calculated the person's spiritual number:

1+5=6

In the study of Spirit Numerology in mysticism, adding the numbers of the day the person was born was called their Birth Day Path Number, affecting the person's life before 27. Birth Month Path Number (calculated by adding the numbers in their birth month) affected their life from 27 to 54 years old, while the Birth Year Path Number (calculating the numbers in their birth year) affected their life from 54 years old onward.

It was July 1349, so Joyce was not yet 27; thus, Klein immediately calculated the Birth Day Path Number.

The number six represented a balanced and harmonious life, with a heart for giving and a decent marriage or engagement.

Following this, he quickly calculated Joyce's Year Path Number.

The so-called Year Path Number was calculated by replacing the birth year with the current year. The digits were then added with his Birth Day Path Number and Birth Month Path Number to get a general understanding of the person's luck for the year.

1+3+4+9=17, 1+7=8; 8+9 (Birth Month Path Number)+6 (Birth Day Path Number)=23; 2+3=5; His Year Path Number is 5, signifying that he would meet with change and accident. He would be required to take certain risks… Klein made a silent judgment after consolidating the facts. He confirmed that the information Anna gave was correct.

He retracted his gaze from the paper and turned it toward Anna, "Mr. Meyer set off on his journey on the 3rd of June?"

"If he did not lie, that is indeed the case." Anna bit her lips.

"Alright." Klein took the fountain pen and made a note of that.

He looked at Anna with his dark brown eyes and said gently, "I will begin creating the astrolabe now. I will need some time and absolute silence; do you mind waiting outside? Angelica will provide you with a cup of tea or coffee."

"Alright." Anna knew that some fortune-tellers had their eccentricities, so she stood up unsurprised. She took her hat with the light blue ribbon and left the Topaz room.

Klein locked the door and returned to the table. He followed the information and set up the astrolabe, including elements such as his horoscope and locations of the corresponding planets and stars.

Throughout the entire process, he did not open the Astromancy Manual. He completed the set up based on his memory.

Over the past few days of his mysticism studies, Klein realized that he could easily grasp and understand anything about divination, quickly turning it into instinct.

Perhaps that is the ability of a Seer… He completed the astrolabe and felt satisfied. He felt as though his body, heart, and soul had relaxed considerably.

As he looked at the outcome, he followed the path of the horoscopes and planets, as well as other supporting details to roughly deduce that Joyce Meyer had met with an accident but would ultimately survive it.

At this point, the divination was technically complete. But Klein wanted to pay much attention to his first business transaction. He hoped to build a reputation to aid in acquiring future jobs. He picked up the pen and wrote a sentence in Hermes: Joyce Meyer's current situation.

He read the sentence silently and memorized the information on the piece of paper, repeating it again and again.

After seven times, Klein grabbed the piece of paper and leaned back into his chair.

He imagined the sphere of light, and his eyes became darker, allowing him to quickly enter a state of Cogitation.

The surroundings took on an ethereal quality. A formless, boundless fog stretched above him.

Klein recalled the contents of the piece of paper, then relaxed. He fell into a deep sleep in this state.

He was using a dream divination technique!

Repeating the question, remembering the details, and then allowing his Astral Projection to roam the spirit world in a dream would allow him to gain revelations!

Ordinary people also had this sort of experience sometimes, but it was hard for them to recall, as the signs in their dreams were more complicated and garbled. A Seer would not have such a problem, for they could see the images directly.

The surroundings began to turn hazy as Klein turned half asleep.

In the contorted fantasy, he saw a blond young man with an aquiline nose. He was swimming frantically in a sea of blood, nearly engulfed by the waves. But in the end, he managed to escape to shore.

The image shattered and changed. Klein saw a blue house with a toy windmill at the door. That blond young man was entering the house slowly, seemingly in joy.

At this moment, the image changed once again. Klein realized that he was inside a magnificent palace.

The walls were destroyed and damaged beyond repair. Moss and weeds grew in multiple areas. Through the holes in the walls, he could see a mountain peak and clouds clinging close to it outside.

Atop the palace was a huge throne carved out of stone. It was adorned with dull gemstones and gold. It looked as though it was not prepared for a human.

This giant throne was empty and mottled, as if it had been washed over by the ages.

Klein looked around in confusion. He did not understand why he would be dreaming of such a scene.

His turbid mind turned sharp as he subconsciously walked out of the palace in an attempt to ascertain where he was.

Suddenly, he felt a gaze fall upon him. It was a gaze that came from behind!

Klein suddenly turned around and stared towards the giant stone throne, only to see a scene of countless transparent maggots slowly twitching and growing.

Klein gasped.

He opened his eyes and woke up from his dream.

Crystal balls, tarot cards, and the prepared astrolabe entered his vision. Reality quickly replaced fantasy.

The initial dream was the result of the divination, but what was the later dream about? It seemed to be targeted at me? Klein put the piece of paper down. He rubbed his temples and contemplated.

He could confirm that it wasn't his fear projecting itself in the form of a dream, for he was doing the divination himself.

A palace not meant for humans on the peak of a mountain… The silent stare… The contorted and weird scene of the maggots… Klein silently guessed as he recalled.

Has the luck enhancement ritual communicated with that existence? Or is it a result of the Antigonus family's notebook… Right, that notebook mentioned the Nation of the Evernight in the Hornacis mountain range! The palace in the dream was on a mountain peak!

He made a simple deduction and was relieved that he had picked Seer. According to Old Neil, Mystery Pryers could also divine through dreams, but they weren't as effective as a Seer.

Sigh, it sure isn't letting me go… All I can hope for is the early capture of Ray Bieber… Klein collected himself and picked up the piece of paper with the diagram of the astrolabe. He slowly walked towards the door.

He opened the door and headed to the reception area. He saw Anna looking out the window, completely ignoring her cup of black tea.

"Ah, Mr. Moretti, is there a result?" She saw Klein in her peripheral vision and stood up in a hurry.

Klein did not answer her immediately. Instead, he asked according to the revelation he received from the dream, "Does your house, or Mr. Meyer's house, have a toy windmill?"

Anna's eyes widened, shocked into silence.

After a while, she muttered, "That was a present he gave me. It is by the door at my house. How did you know that…"

C-can this be divined?

Klein smiled and spoke with a gentle tone, "Congratulations Miss Anna, Mr. Joyce Meyer is currently a guest at your place. If you rush back, you should still be able to meet him. He just experienced a calamity, an unimaginably painful journey. What he needs now are not questions, but consolation and a warm hug."

"Really?" Anna asked in disbelief.

The fortune-tellers she knew would never speak with such certainty or give such firm conclusions.

"You will know if you go back immediately," Klein replied with a gentle tone and smile.

"Oh, Lord of Steam, is that true? Has my poor Joyce returned? Are you certain? No, I cannot believe it…" Anna froze for a moment and said a few delirious words.

She took out a one-soli note from her purse and did not wait for Klein to give her the change. She broke into a small jog as she left the Divination Club, taking a carriage back home.

"Does this include my tip?" Klein looked at the note and shook his head with a laugh.

…

A two-wheeled carriage steered quickly across the streets and entered East Borough.

Anna watched the streets sweeping past her, feeling a mixture of unease, anticipation, and fear. It did not take long before the toy windmill entered her field of vision.

She got off the carriage, showing no care for her bearing. She staggered quickly towards the door and rang the doorbell.

The door creaked open, revealing a blond young man dressed in a black formal suit. He was haggard, but his eyes carried a glint of joy. He had an aquiline nose.

"I thought that I would miss you today," Joyce said with a smile.

“…Oh, Exalted Steam, you really are back!" Anna rubbed her eyes, exclaiming in pleasant surprise.

What the fortune-teller said was true!

No, that was a real seer!

It was simply fascinating!

Thoughts welled in her mind as Anna pounced forward with tears in her eyes and gave her fiancé a warm hug.

The two of them hugged silently outside the grayish-blue house. The toy windmill turned slowly, seemingly tossing all their difficulties far away.

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CHAPTER 56
ESCAPE FROM THE SEA

In a rather spacious living room, Anna and Joyce were seated on different sofas, separated by Anna's parents.

Joyce sighed with a satisfied expression and said, "Exalted Steam, I am so lucky to come back alive, to be able to see Anna again."

"My poor Joyce, what happened?" Anna couldn't help but ask with concern.

Joyce took a glance at his fiancée, and his expression turned grave.

"I still feel terrified to this day. I keep waking up from my dreams again and again. Five days after the Alfalfa left Caesar Pier, we came across pirates, scary pirates. The only fortunate thing was that their leader's name was Nast."

"The pirate that calls himself the King of the Five Seas?" Anna's father, Mr. Wayne, asked in shock.

Although Joyce had already been there for half an hour, he did not volunteer details about his ordeal. He appeared to be fearful, perturbed, and uneasy. It was only after Anna returned and hugged him that he finally appeared to put it behind him.

"Yes, due to his declaration of being a descendant of the Solomon Empire, the King of the Five Seas, Nast didn't believe in killing captives. Hence, we were only robbed and didn't lose our lives. His subordinates even left us sufficient food," Joyce said as he recalled the ordeal.

His body started to quiver, but he continued to describe his deepest and scariest nightmare.

"I didn't lose much of my wealth. I believed that my misfortune was over, but as we continued towards our destination, a heated conflict erupted among the Alfalfa's passengers and crew. From disagreement, to fighting, to drawing revolvers, and raising swords to kill each other… I saw nothing but blood during that period. One after another, people beside me fell with eyes opened, never to be closed. Their limbs, hearts, and intestines were scattered across the floors."

"Those of us who were unwilling to turn into savage beasts, the rational group, had nowhere to hide and nowhere to escape. We were surrounded by deep blue waves and the boundless ocean… Some wailed, some begged for mercy, some sold their bodies, but their heads were hung from the mast either way.

"Anna, I reeled in despair back then. I thought I would never see you again. Fortunately, in such a nightmare, there was still a hero. The captain took us to hide in the sturdy keel of the ship, and we relied on the stored water and food there until the maniacs reached their limits. Mr. Tris encouraged us, courageously leading us in an assault against those murderers…

"After an unforgettable bloody battle, we survived. But the Alfalfa strayed off course, and only a third of the original sailors remained."

…

When he depicted the most horrible and darkest side of the human psyche, Joyce couldn't help but recall the "hero," the man that called himself Tris. He had a round and amiable face. He was shy like a girl and enjoyed staying in a corner. Only people whom he was familiar with knew that he was a very good conversationalist.

But it was such an unremarkable boy who stood in front of everyone with determination in the worst of days.

"Oh, Exalted Steam, my poor Joyce, you went through such a heartbreaking ordeal. Thank God, praise be to God, He prevented us from eternal separation." Tears welled up in Anna's eyes as she constantly dotted three points to form a triangle, the Sacred Emblem for Steam and Machinery.

Joyce revealed a faint pale smile.

"This is the reward for our faith. The Alfalfa then went through storms, lost its course, and after surmounting one challenge after another, arrived at Enmat Harbor."

"Due to the bloodbath that had taken place on the boat, those of us that survived were held captive by the police and questioned separately. We didn't have a chance to send telegrams home to update our loved ones. When they released us this morning, I immediately borrowed some money from my friend and took the steam locomotive back. Thank God for letting me set foot on the land of Tingen again, allowing me to see all of you again."

Then, he looked towards his fiancée in confusion.

"Anna, when you saw me, I could feel your happiness and surprise, but I couldn't understand why you rushed towards the door so excitedly right after you got off the carriage. Heh, I had planned on giving you a huge surprise."

Anna thought about what had happened earlier, and continued in disbelief, "There's nothing to hide, Joyce. As I was worried about you, I went to the only divination club in Tingen City today for a divination. That fortune-teller—no, the seer told me, he said, 'Your fiancé has returned; he's in the house with a windmill.'"

"What?" the Wayne couple and Joyce exclaimed simultaneously.

Anna covered her face and shook her head.

"I can barely believe it either, but it happened. Exalted Steam, perhaps there really are miracles in this world."

"Joyce, that seer asked me for your name, characteristics, address, and birth date. He told me he was going to do an astrolabe divination. Then, he asked me if the house with a toy windmill was yours or mine. When I confirmed it was mine, he said, 'Congratulations Miss Anna, Mr. Joyce Meyer is currently a guest at your place. What he needs now are not questions, but consolation and a warm hug.'"

"God…" Joyce found it unbelievable and incomprehensible. "Does he know me? Did someone send him a telegram? Could it be that he is familiar with the police in Enmat Harbor? No, that doesn't explain it. How did he know that I came to your place? How could he possibly know that you would seek a divination? Did you make an appointment?"

"No, I made a selection at the last minute," Anna replied with a vacant-looking expression.

"Perhaps a good seer needs to be in control of vast amounts of information, even if it cannot be used any time soon. Perhaps, that is the fascinating aspect of divination." Anna's father, Mr. Wayne sighed and concluded. "In the known history of more than a thousand years and in the uncertain Fourth Epoch, divination has existed and has yet to disappear. I think there must be a reason for that."

Joyce shook his head lightly and asked, "What's that seer's name?"

Anna thought and said, "Klein Moretti."

…

In the reception lobby of the Divination Club.

As Klein had spoken softly, Angelica knew not to go close. Therefore, she only saw Anna leave as though she had lost her soul, wearing shock and

confusion on her face.

Angelica briskly walked to the sofa and asked out of curiosity, "Was the result good?"

She did not dare ask the actual result, afraid of violating the unspoken rule of fortune-tellers.

"Yeah." Klein nodded and took out three copper coins from his pocket. "One-eighth of one soli is one and a half pennies, right?"

"Yes." Angelica looked at the copper coins and realized that one of them was a penny and two of them were halfpence. She quickly held it out and said, "There's an additional halfpence."

Klein smiled faintly and said, "Thank you for taking care of my customer. She gave me a tip, so it's only right I give you one."

It ' s also to thank you for recommending me… he added in his heart.

"Alright." Angelica felt an unknown fear of Klein, but since the reason was appropriate, she didn't refuse the offer.

Klein returned to the meeting room, believing that there would be more people requesting his divinations.

However, he did not receive a second customer by forty minutes past five.

It wasn't because the Divination Club's business was poor, but because most people had already chosen a fortune-teller.

They likely were recommended by others and had long determined whose services to hire… In short, I'm still lacking in reputation… Klein laughed at himself for using game terminology.

He finished his third cup of Sibe black tea, grabbed his top hat and silver-edged cane, and walked leisurely out of the meeting room.

Angelica suddenly recalled Glacis's instructions, and she quickly moved to intercept him.

"Mr. Moretti, when will you next visit the club? Mr. Glacis would like to thank you in person."

"I will come over whenever I'm free. If fate permits us, he will definitely meet me," Klein replied, using the tone of a psychic charlatan, as though he was in character.

Then, he left the club before Angelica could respond and took the public carriage home.

When he stepped through the door, Klein found Benson reading the newspaper and Melissa putting together bits and pieces of gears, bearings, and springs in the evening sunlight.

"Good afternoon. Did Mrs. Shaud visit?" Klein asked casually.

Benson didn't put down his newspaper; instead, he lifted his head.

"Mrs. Shaud's visit lasted fifteen minutes. She brought some gifts, and she was very happy with the muffins and lemon cake that we prepared. She also invited us over whenever we have the chance to. She is a friendly, well-mannered lady. She knows how to carry a conversation very well too."

"The only problem is their belief in the Lord of Storms. They believe that girls shouldn't go to school, but should be homeschooled instead," Melissa complained.

It was obvious that she was very upset about it.

"Don't mind that. As long as she doesn't disturb us, she will still be a good neighbor," Klein comforted his sister, smiling.

The Loen Kingdom was a multi-religious nation, unlike the Frosac Empire in the north which only believed in the God of Combat or the Feynapotter Kingdom in the south which only worshiped Mother Earth. It was inevitable that the congregations from the three major churches of the Lord of Storms, the Evernight Goddess, and the God of Steam and Machinery had conflicts in beliefs and customs. After a thousand years of this, they restrained each other, making coexistence possible.

"Okay." Melissa pursed her lips and redirected her focus onto the pile of parts again.

After dinner, Klein continued revising history. Only when Melissa and Benson showered and returned to their rooms did he wash up, enter his bedroom, and lock his door.

He needed to organize and summarize what he had learned and the problems that he encountered to prevent himself from forgetting or missing out any critical points. Only by doing so would he be able to respond to subsequent developments in the future with a clear train of thought.

Klein flipped open his notebook, took out his pen, and started writing in Mandarin.

"Why is the key to digesting potions acting?"

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CHAPTER 57
ORGANIZATION AND SUMMARY

After pausing for a moment, Klein continued writing.

"The essence to resolving the problems with potions is through digestion, not simply controlling it. This can be understood in a straightforward manner.

"Merely controlling it would be akin to using the power of potions as an external tool. A tamed beast no matter how well controlled would ultimately not be a part of a person. The risk of it turning on them would be ever present. As for digestion, it is to view the downed potion as a part of them. They can break it down, fuse with it, absorb it, and form an overall system.

"I am currently certain of this point. What is more important is how 'acting' helps in digestion.

"According to my experience as a Seer today, I can make two hypotheses. They can be verified in the future."

"One: Acting based on the potion's name changes the state of one's body, heart, and soul, making them closer to the remnant headstrong psyche of the potion's core. This results in resonance which allows gradual assimilation and absorption.

"Two: The remnant headstrong psyche spirit of the magic medicine might be like a computer with complete defensive mechanisms. If one wishes to attack it and break it down, they will need to find a bug, security hole, or

key. The name of the potion provides a corresponding clue; thus, we can disguise our body, heart, and soul as 'part of the system' through acting, and so we deceive the system's defenses. This line of thought is similar to Emperor Roselle's description.

"No matter which guess is right, there is no escaping the body, heart, and soul, for they are the only bridge between acting and the power of potions."

Klein put down his pen and looked at the paragraph of text. For a moment, he even wanted to thank the education he received from the Foodaholic Empire.

No matter if he chose science or engineering for his further education, he was equipped with the basics of logical thought. Otherwise, there was no way he could have become a keyboard warrior, nor would he have been able to analyze his current situation.

"Acting might have an effect, but we'll have to wait and see for the specifics," Klein guessed.

After that, he wrote down his second question.

"Why would a Seer, being more well-learned and professional in the domain of mysticism, be lacking in means when it comes to direct combat? Wouldn't being more well-learned and professional make a Seer even more powerful, giving them the ability to discover a way to defeat their enemies?

"The reasons could be…

"First, just like the web novels I've read in the past, I have transmigrated to a game world that has become reality. Thus, different 'jobs' come with different specialties that have to be balanced against each other. But up to this point, there has been no sign of this world being a game, nor are there signs of mission-like developments. I'll put this reason on hold, but it's very unlikely.

"Second, the fundamental law of this world is balance. The Creator made this world with the core idea of balance.

"Third, potions at the same Sequence level would have the same level of power. It is the most optimal state based on what our forefathers found out and summarized. Exceeding this level of power would make it easier for one to collapse and lose control. Below this level of power would make it such that one would not obtain the desired Beyonder powers. Thus, under the situation of a balanced power level, being stronger in one area would naturally mean that one is weaker in another area.

"Fourth, everything in this world originated from the same source; they were formed by the remnants of the Creator. Thus, everything in this world is technically fragments of the Creator, and the fact that they have to complement each other would mean that there are inherent shortcomings to an individual.

"I am leaning towards the third and fourth reasons, but the latter stems from an unconfirmed myth and can only serve as a guide.

"Thus, I shall use the third reason as a guide, and try to ascertain it using my current knowledge and future studies."

At this point, Klein had already written two full pages but did not stop. Instead, he penned a new question.

"From what I learned today, my luck enhancement ritual is categorized as a classic ritualistic magic.

"Similar kinds of ritualistic magic can be split into three parts, the first being a sacrifice that sparks the interest of a corresponding existence. The second is comprised of incantations specifically describing the existence in question. The third is using simple formatting and symbols to convey what one is asking for.

"Using this as a benchmark to analyze the luck enhancement ritual, there's an obvious problem. "There is no third part!

"It has the sacrifice aspect in the placement of staple foods and walking a square in a counterclockwise manner with four steps. There is also a clear indication who the incantation is for, such as the phrase, 'Blessings Stem from The Immortal Lord of Heaven and Earth.'

"But all I did after was close my eyes and wait. There was nothing in the ritual that described the goal of enhancing my luck.

"In other words, the corresponding existence has no way of knowing what the so-called luck enhancement ritual is asking for, and can only do as they see fit… Do as they see fit…

"What a troll! Isn't that darn 'Quintessential Divination and Arcane Arts of the Qin and Han Dynasty' too much of a troll?

"I must have had rocks in my head back then for trying…"

Klein stopped writing and took two deep breaths, trying hard to calm himself down.

He spat out a foul breath and continued writing.

"I can consider re-designing the ritual, making it more complete. The motive of the ritual shall be to return to Earth, back to the world with my parents and friends.

"Then here comes the question: was the entity truly acting on a whim? Or is there a deeper meaning to it?

"Also, is the entity that the descriptive incantations point towards in this world the same one from Earth?

"If so, the difference in results between the first and second ritual could be explained as the entity doing as it wishes. But the results of me appearing above the gray fog during the second and third time, while being able to connect to Justice and The Hanged Man has basically no differences. Why would that be so?

"If the fourth ritual tomorrow afternoon shows me the same stable results, that would mean that the effects are consistent. That would mean that the unknown entity has an agenda I do not know about. If that is the case, adding new descriptions and requests would not get me a clear response. In fact, it might complicate the ritual and result in adverse effects.

"Would the difference between the first ritual and the subsequent rituals—under the premise that the entity I called upon is the same one—mean that the results would be different depending on the world I'm in? It is like I am using a different interface…

"Then how can I design it to obtain my desired outcome?

"If I think that the entities behind the first and subsequent rituals are different, some of the questions can be perfectly answered. But similarly, the stability of the results in the second and third rituals would mean that the entity I am praying to has a certain agenda, and there is no way I can change that for the time being.

"The most important question is the identity of the entity that the ritual is directed. Where is He, and why doesn't He give me any clues or guidance?

"Could He be deep in the world of fog?

"Hmm, can I treat Him as an entity in slumber, an entity that would give fixed responses if I give Him a certain stimulus, but would not interfere with what I do other than that?

"Then I can introduce a different ritual as a stimulus and conclude whether the feedback I receive is regular. That way, I can find the correct method of

returning.

"But the problem lies in the possibility that He is not asleep. In that case, such tests might result in terrifying outcomes. It might be really dangerous.

"The first attempt must be conducted with extreme caution. The design must not anger the being…

"What a headache. I need more knowledge."

Klein sighed and gave a summary.

Finally, he wrote down other miscellaneous items.

"There are always formless voices resonating in my ears, shouting 'Hornacis and… uh, was it saying Frygrea or Feygrea?

"Hornacis is the mountain range dividing the Loen Kingdom and the Intis Republic. Its main peak is six thousand meters above sea level.

"According to the records in the Antigonus family's diary, there existed a Nation of the Evernight in the Fourth Epoch. Is the Nation of the Evernight related to the Evernight Goddess—is there any connection between the two? Are they allies or enemies? Was the Antigonus family obliterated by the Church of the Evernight Goddess due to Nation of the Evernight?

"Did I hear murmurings coming from the diary, from the howls of the Antigonus family over one or two thousand years?

"What then does Frygrea, uh—Flegrea mean?

"An interesting question. To be able to leave behind such a diary, to leave behind Sealed Artifact 2-049 implies that the Antigonus family had possession of a relatively powerful Beyonder power. If that is so, which Sequence did they possess? Was it complete or not complete?

"My realization that the diary is in the hands of Ray Bieber was a bit of a coincidence, but without any indication of it being arranged, could my fate really be tied up with that diary's?"

…

His ideas were penned on the pieces of paper. Klein tried his best to write down the events he had experienced and his guesses about their meaning.

He wrote a total of four pages on both sides of each paper.

Rip! Klein suddenly tore off the four pages and read them from top to bottom, sometimes marking certain sections with his pen, adding a few sentences at other times.

Time flew quickly. The crimson moon was temporarily covered by dark clouds. Klein picked up the pocket watch on the table, snapped it open, and looked at the time.

He put down the watch and took out a box of matches from his drawer. He lit one and brought it close to the four pages of notes.

The orange flame ignited the edges of the paper and quickly spread.

Klein placed the notes on top of the wooden dustbin and watched the ashes drop.

He then released his fingers, allowing the papers to fall. In just ten seconds, everything had disappeared. All that was left was the still-swirling ash and the charred bottom of the dustbin.

As there was Emperor Roselle's secret diary in this world, Klein did not dare leave behind any evidence that he knew how to write Chinese—if Old Neil and the rest discovered the four pieces of paper he wrote, he would have no idea how to explain the matter.

And while writing the confidential questions, Klein was worried that the one paying attention to his dreams would be able to see and decipher the contents no matter which language he used, be it Loen, ancient Feysac, or Hermes. Therefore, he could only write notes in Chinese to organize and summarize. After he was done with the task, he burned the notes to leave no traces.

And precisely because there was no way of saving, he set up a plan for himself. He would do this summary once a week just in case he forgot anything.

As he watched the ashes fall, Klein pulled out a white piece of paper. He wrote the title: "To my respected mentor,"

He wanted to write to Senior Associate Professor Quentin Cohen, asking if he had any relevant historical information about the main peak of the Hornacis mountain range.

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CHAPTER 58
A TRAIN OF THOUGHT

The next day, a Monday morning.

Klein, who had the day off, didn't leave home. Instead, he gave Melissa his letter directed to Mentor Cohen Quentin and more than enough money to buy stamps. He entrusted her with the job of mailing the letter at the post office near the Tingen Technical School where she studied.

After breakfast, he slept in to make up for the lack of sleep caused by the previous night's "work." He only woke up because of his stomach's grumblings close to noon.

He heated up some leftovers from the night before and ate them with a loaf of rye bread. Klein grabbed a newspaper and entered the bathroom on the second floor.

Whenever he did that, he couldn't help but sigh at the lack of a cell phone.

After about seven or eight minutes, he left the toilet refreshed and washed his hands. He then returned to his bedroom and locked his door.

Klein drew the curtains, lit up the gas lamp, and cogitated for half an hour. After practicing his Spiritual Vision, spirit dowsing, and dowsing rod for half an hour, he spent another hour mentally reviewing the mysticism knowledge he had gained recently.

After doing that, he ripped up the old newspaper and crumpled them into a few balls. He wrote on them, "Moon Flower Candle," "Full Moon Essence Oil," and other names of materials. He followed the prescribed steps of

ritualistic magic in his head in order to master every little detail. Until he was entirely familiar with it, he didn't intend to try ritualistic magic because it was both a waste of materials and also easily attracted danger.

He repeated again and again until he picked up his silver pocket watch patterned with vine-leaves and took a glance. He realized that it was a quarter to three.

He considered for a few seconds and brought the scraps of old newspapers to the kitchen on the first floor to burn them. While doing so, he made sure he was in an optimal state of mind as he prepared for the Tarot Gathering.

Locking his bedroom door once again, Klein didn't wait for the clock to strike three. He planned to enter the area above the gray fog ahead of time.

He wanted to seize the chance to explore the place thoroughly!

As Klein stood in an empty spot in his room and started walking counterclockwise, he suddenly worried that Justice and The Hanged Man had yet to enter a suitable environment. He thought of a particular matter.

Would they be disturbed or discovered?

He had previously mentioned to allow Justice and The Hanged Man to apply for "leave" ahead of time if they needed to be absent from the Gathering for some reason such as being unable to find time alone or unexpected circumstances.

It would have been an almost unsolvable problem for Klein in the past. There was no way he could build an entire server-based Internet by hand in a different world, right? Any technology beyond the telegram could expose him.

But now, he had suddenly found inspiration from ritualistic magic.

"Ritualistic magic borrows the powers of others by seeking the help of different existences. Similar incantations would make it clear who it is directed to in the beginning, such as the Evernight Goddess or the Lady of Crimson. It would be a description of the unknown and clandestine existences."

"Then, can I amend the chant and redirect the beginning of the chant towards myself?"

"Directed at me…"

"This way, even if Justice and The Hanged Man conduct the ritual in different locations, I would receive their messages."

Klein suddenly felt fresh insight as he began analyzing the likelihood of the method working.

"There are two difficulties. First, I am not an incredibly strong high-level Sequencer. Even if the description of the incantation was directed to me, I couldn't possibly receive the 'request.'"

"Second, how can I ensure that the description of the chant is directed at me accurately, and doesn't stray away and hit some other unknown existence that fits the description? That would be incredibly dangerous."

Klein paced back and forth, deep in thought for a possible workable solution.

He went in circles with silent footsteps. Then, he naturally linked the matter with the mysterious world of the gray fog.

"Even if I can't receive the message, that doesn't mean the gray fog can't. Its connection with the crimson stars can 'drag' a person into the space directly, regardless of where they are in the physical world.

"I could consider tying myself to the mysterious space together during the directed description…

"In accordance with this train of thought, even though I might not immediately receive the 'request' when the other party is holding the ritual, I will still be able to see the corresponding messages whenever I enter the gray fog.

"To put it simply, it is the difference between being online and offline on an instant messaging system."

Klein became more excited the more he thought. He felt that his idea was worth a try.

"Hmm, what kind of description could be used to precisely direct a message to me and to the gray fog world?" He started thinking about the actual details.

In fact, he had an incantation that would definitely work. It was none other than the Loen translation of 'Blessings Stem from The Celestial Worthy of Heaven and Earth.' But herein lies the problem: he would lose control of the gray fog and lose his leading role. He could only exclude it.

'Fool from an alternate world'? No way. It is quite accurate, and there is almost no other existence that fits the criteria, but it would expose my biggest secret… Klein thought of one incantation after another, but he crossed off each one.

After about seven to eight minutes, he finally decided on the description of the first paragraph that directed to him.

"The Fool that doesn't belong to this era."

It was obviously not accurate enough; therefore, Klein quickly added, "The mysterious ruler above the gray fog."

The combination of the two lines practically limited it to him. Furthermore, he had tied the gray fog to him.

"It's still a little short. I cannot eliminate the possibility that there are multiple spaces and rulers above the gray fog. I cannot eliminate the fact that the description might be directed to the spirit world…" Klein creased his eyebrows and planned on making it more certain.

Hmm… He thought for a full minute and finally decided on the last part of the description.

"The King of Yellow and Black who wields good luck!"

It shared a similar meaning to "Blessings Stem From The Exalted Thearch of Heaven and Earth [1]." If the incantation purely depended on that part of the description, it might end up being directed away and provoking unknown dangerous existences. But with the first two lines as a limitation, and his experience of arriving above the fog through a similar incantation, he believed that the target's description could result in a perfect lock on.

Klein wasn't sure if casting the ritualistic magic with those three descriptions would be effective, but he was definite that it would not attract the attention of another existence, It wouldn't throw Justice and The Hanged Man into danger.

Klein heaved out a long sigh and recited the incantation that he had decided upon.

"The Fool that doesn't belong to this era, you are the mysterious ruler above the gray fog; you are the King of Yellow and Black who wields good luck…"

He nodded his head slightly and took out his pocket watch to confirm the time.

"It's already 2:58…” Without further thought, Klein put away his pocket and entered Cogitation. Soon he chanted and took four steps counterclockwise to form a square.

The most ferocious noises and heart-stirring roars were heard once again. He felt the headache that was even harder to deal with than the pain of consuming the Seer potion.

The pain was not a sharp pain that tore through his head. It was a throbbing pain that made him manic and irrational. It was a pain that left him in chaotic confusion.

Klein controlled himself using Cogitation and tried hard to ignore the voices.

The muttering and murmurs receded like the tides. His body became ethereal, along with his spirituality. Everything seemed to float.

The boundless gray fog appeared before his sight, the crimson stars at varying distances from him, just like pairs of eyes.

Above the gray fog stood the palace, lofty and towering like the home of a giant. It was as though it had been there for millions of years.

All Klein did was will it and he disappeared from where he was, reappearing at the Seat of Honor at the long bronze table with twenty-two high-back chairs.

"The effect of the ritual is definitely fixed…” Klein muttered. He tapped his glabella gently and allowed the fog to engulf him, ones thicker than before. According to the description of The Hanged Man, if Justice had become a Spectator, it would be best not to reveal any of his tics before her.

Without any time for exploring, Klein extended his right hand and formed an invisible connection, connecting him to the two familiar crimson stars.

…

On the roaring blue waves of the Sonia Sea, an ancient sailboat was sailing with the wind.

Alger Wilson locked himself in the captain's cabin and made ghost ship provide him the best protection.

He opened the pocket watch before him and laid it next to the brass sextant. The clock was ticking without joy as it exuded nervousness.

When the hour hand, minute hand, and second hand aligned, there was an explosion of crimson before Alger Wilson. It ignored the layers and layers of protection he had placed over himself.

Sigh.… His sigh reverberated across the captain's room.

…

Backlund, Empress Borough.

Audrey Hall laid against a down-feather pillow and glanced at the yellow paper in her hand. Her gemlike eyes looked like they had two souls spiraling slowly in them.

Her gaze was calm and cool, as if she were waiting for a play to begin.

As the crimson red erupted, she looked at herself being swallowed with complete detachment.

…

Above the gray fog, in the magnificent palace, on the ancient and mottled long bronze table.

Klein, who had already activated his Spiritual Vision, looked over when Audrey Hall's figure began to form. He was not surprised to see that the colors deep in her aura had blended together. It became pure and serene, like a lake that was clear and reflective.

She really did become a Beyonder… Klein was just about to move his gaze away when he suddenly saw the chair belonging to Miss Justice change.

The bright stars on the back of the chair moved swiftly, forming an illusory constellation that didn't belong to reality.

That constellation was familiar to Klein because it was one of the symbols of mysticism.

It was a symbol that represented "Giant Dragon"!

Spectator… Giant Dragon… Klein restrained himself from shaking his head and looked over at the back of The Hanged Man's chair.

Typically speaking, it was impossible for him to see the back of the chair from his angle, but this was where he was in control. Everything presented itself according to his will.

The constellation on the back of the chair had not changed, but since Klein had grasped the basics of mysticism, he wasn't as ignorant as before. He could recognize that it was the symbol of "Windstorm."

Sailor… Keeper of the Sea… Windstorm… That's reasonable. The color deep in The Hanged Man's aura is much purer than it was… Has he advanced? Oh yeah, what about the symbol behind my chair?

Klein suppressed his impulse to look, rapped the edge of the long table thrice just like before, and smiled as he said, "Congratulations, Miss Justice, you are a Beyonder now."

He can tell straight away? Audrey was stunned and smiled faintly.

"Thank you, Mr. Fool, and thank you, Mr. Hanged Man."

"That was much faster that I thought," Alger Wilson said honestly.

Klein didn't continue the topic but tapped his glabella and said with a smile, "Lady, Sir, have either of you found Roselle's diary?"

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CHAPTER 59
ROSELLE'S ORIGINS

Upon hearing The Fool's question, Audrey did not immediately answer like in the past. Instead, she widened her crystalline eyes and glanced at The Hanged Man with a scrutinous attitude.

Alger subconsciously subdued his body motions. After a few seconds of silence, he said, "I found two pages of the Emperor Roselle's diary and have memorized their contents."

"I have one page," Audrey, whose vision was obscured by the fog, said as though she was removed from the conversation.

"Pretty good." Klein did not allow his joy or his disappointment be noticed from his voice.

He felt joy as there were three full pages, but disappointment also because there were only three pages. Their initial search for the diary was definitely easier, for all they had to do was ask through their connections and channels they were already familiar with. Collecting the pages would become more and more difficult as time went on as it would involve more and more elements.

"Should we 'express' them now?" Audrey inquired with a calm tone.

"Yes." Klein simply nodded.

He maintained his posture without any change. He had to be cautious in front of a Spectator.

As he finished his sentence, pieces of yellowish-brown goatskin parchment and dark red fountain pens appeared in front of Audrey and Alger.

The two of them picked up their pens and started to recall the symbols they had seen. They also infused the emotions of expressing them out.

Silently, lines of text appeared on the goatskin. Some of them appeared proper, some delicate, others slanted.

In a mere minute, the contents that Alger and Audrey had forcibly memorized were all written.

Klein willed the three pieces of parchment into his hands.

He gave the pages a cursory glance and realized that some of the grammar was wrong. There were also missing and wrong words in the content.

But experimentation had proved that incorrect sequencing of words to some extent did not affect the overall comprehension of Chinese. Klein was also not afraid of missing words since he often read web novels filled with censored asterisks.

"8th April. I stood at the bow of Black King and stretched my arms, saying to Grimm and Edwards, 'My fortune is yours for the taking, but you'll have to find it first. I left everything I own at the ends of the Fog Sea!' They did not understand my humor at all and even asked if I really had other treasures. How boring. You can't be my Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse if you keep at that!"

"11th April. I discovered a nameless island that was not on a safe sea route. There are a good number of extraordinary animals there, no—I prefer calling them extraordinary beings; it feels more impressive that way. Other than that, there are several weird creatures on the island. I believe that if Darwin had been transmigrated there, there is no way he could have written his Theory of Evolution."

"15th April. Grimm has suddenly become a little odd. Has he been infected by something?"

When did Emperor Roselle, who was born in the Intis Kingdom, set off on a voyage? The Fog Sea should be the sea west of the Intis Republic… Yea, I need to use historical information from the library to cross reference this… Klein quickly finished reading a page, casting his gaze to the back of the piece of paper.

At this point, he no longer hid the fact that he could decipher Emperor Roselle's secret symbols since this ability fitted the persona and status of The Fool. Audrey and Alger did not speak. They waited silently, as if unsurprised by such a revelation. In fact, they even believed that it was only right.

"2nd October. They actually wanted me to marry Matilda from the Abel family without even consulting me first! Heavens, I have not even met her! No, I must decline! Even if I were to run away from home and survive on my own and suffer the vicissitudes of life, I must fight against this marriage!"

"5th October. Miss Matilda is really pretty."

"6th October. Her personality and her demeanor is just my type. I am starting to look forward to the marriage."

Hey, Emperor, where is your integrity? Klein leaned back into his seat, not allowing his emotions to pass through the fog.

He realized that Gustav did not write in his diary every day early on. Most of the time, he would only write in the diary when there were certain events that he needed to lampoon, record, or to vent his emotions.

He shifted his gaze downward. Klein looked at the last sentence of this page.

"9th October. They actually called me the Son of the Steam. I like that very much."

Klein was a little disappointed that the information in the first two pages was of little value.

But he did not turn sullen. He moved the third page to the top. This page had content written on both sides of the paper.

"21st May. The Church of the God of Craftsmanship gave me two choices, two beginning Sequence pathways. One of them is the Savant. It is a complete Sequence pathway they possess. The other is Mystery Pryer, which they obtained from the Moses Ascetic Order, but it lacks the higher Sequences."

"22nd May. My choice was easy: Savant! The Savant has a complete Sequence pathway! Although wielding more information on mysticism can aid my return home, the problem is that if I am not strong enough, there is a need to acquire external help for transmigration. And I do not know if this external entity would be good or bad, benevolent or malicious. I cannot control it, and thus it could be very dangerous. In that case, why not strengthen myself and return by relying on my own powers? Thus, the complete Sequence was the most important factor in my considerations!"

"23rd May. I have become a Savant. With the power of the potion, I actually recalled all the knowledge I had learned in the past, such as physics, chemistry, etc…

"I have not only recalled the knowledge, but I understand it more deeply, as well as its possible applications and implications. Haha, this is a 'job' specially tailored for a transmigrator like me from an alternate realm. I will be able to express my advantage to the greatest extent! I have to say that if I were to return in my present state to the third year of high school, I would definitely become top scholar. If I could further specialize in an area, it wouldn't even be too hard for me to become a scientist."

"26th May. I am enjoying my status as a Savant. Something odd worth mentioning. When I address myself as a Savant, doing things that are in line with this role, the murmurings that drive me crazy become considerably softer. I have also been able to control my occasional temper outbursts. I have also recalled the matter regarding the diary.

"Is this the 'acting' that the mysterious Mr. Zaratul mentioned? This could be key in resolving the side effects posed by potions."

As Klein read the diary page, he had a deep realization that there was a fundamental difference between how he and Emperor Roselle did things.

For example, regarding the matter of returning home, Klein considered grasping in-depth knowledge of mysticism to avoid risks and accomplish his goal, while Emperor Roselle preferred to rely on himself and face the risk.

I have to say, I envy people like that sometimes. Perhaps everyone yearns for something they do not possess… Of course, I also have to consider strengthening myself; both of these are important, Klein thought, sighing a little.

The description provided by Emperor Roselle about acting instilled Klein with confidence that the conclusion he made about acting yesterday was more or less correct.

He put the three diary pages down, looked up at Justice and The Hanged Man. He smiled and said, "My apologies, I was too absorbed in reading them."

Audrey calmed the envy in her heart and smiled faintly.

"I can understand. I hope to one day be able to exchange information about the diary's contents."

"That will require a price." Klein smiled and glanced at Justice, then swept his gaze towards the silent Hanged Man.

Audrey put her palms together and placed them in front of her.

"Mr. Fool, Mr. Hanged Man, I have three questions to ask. If you think that the answers warrant a high price, tell me what you want, I will try my best to seek it."

"No problem," Alger answered succinctly.

Klein nodded and leaned back further, making himself comfortable.

Audrey thought for a few seconds and said, "The first question is, what does 'acting' really mean? I realize that the remnant psyche in the potion has minute effects on me; is that because I've been acting as a Spectator all this while?"

Alger did not speak; instead, he looked at The Fool, as though waiting for him to give an answer.

Klein rubbed his finger on the edge of the table and said in a relaxed tone, "Let me explain this with an analogy. Imagine the core powers of your potion as a tightly guarded castle. The remnants of the psyche that can cause a lash back resides within that castle. Our goal is to get rid of it and become the true master of the castle.

"There are two ways we can do that. The first is to forcefully invade the castle. There is no guarantee that this will work, and you will most definitely injure yourself unless you can suppress it with absolute power. But of course, we are not equipped to do that.

"The second way is to get the owner of the castle to extend an invitation. This invitation can allow us to slide through the scrutiny of the guards and infiltrate the castle. We can then easily finish off the enemies. But the problem lies in the fact that this invitation specifies the facial features and

characteristics of the guest. Thus, we have to disguise ourselves and act as the guest, do you understand?"

Alger immediately asked, as if he had anticipated this reply, "Then the aforementioned invitation is the name of the potion's Sequence?"

"That's right," Klein answered with great affirmation.

Audrey froze for a moment, having the sudden feeling that she completely understood what 'acting' meant.

She immediately exited her Spectator state due to her excitement. She praised in joy, "What an exceptional method, I think—I think it fits your title. Its style is very compatible with The Fool… I would never have believed that acting would have such an effect. Luckily, I have been acting as a Spectator the past few days."

She paused for a moment before saying, "I think that this is a very valuable answer; my heart is not at ease accepting it for nothing. Mr. Fool, what do you need in exchange? Of course, I still remember that I owe you a page of Emperor Roselle's diary."

"More pages of Roselle's diary, or…" Klein paused for a moment.

He had wanted to get information about the Sequence regarding the Seer but felt that such a low-level request would ruin the mystical image of The Fool. Thus, he chose to give up on it and planned to ask them discreetly some other day.

I just advanced recently and have yet to completely digest the Seer potion… He consoled himself and added on without expression, "Anything regarding the Antigonus family, even if I'm already aware of them myself."

Alger remained silent for a few seconds. He looked at the top of the long bronze table for a moment before slowly opening his mouth.

"Mr. Fool… I believe I can pay you back immediately with the information you requested just now."

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CHAPTER 60
SECOND BLASPHEMY SLATE

"No problem." Klein tried to maintain his unchanging deep tone.

He rested his left elbow on the armrest of his chair and supported his forehead slightly with his fingers, posing as though he was listening calmly.

Alger deliberated over his words and said, "The Antigonus is an ancient family. Their history can be traced back to the Cataclysm Epoch before the Fourth Epoch and is related to the second Blasphemy Slate."

The second Blasphemy Slate? There's a second Blasphemy Slate? How many are there? Klein's pupils shrank, and he nearly changed his posture.

According to what The Hanged Man and Justice have said previously, the Blasphemy Slate contained the profound mysteries of the twenty-two paths of the divine!

There are two of such important items, or even more?

Twenty-two paths of the divine… Sequences and pathways… Could these two nouns mean the same thing? Every complete Sequence pathway leads straight to the throne of the divine?

At that instant, the description of the second Blasphemy Slate gave Klein numerous thoughts. He believed that if not for the thick grayish-white fog concealing him, his emotional reaction would probably have been discovered by Miss Spectator.

As for the words Cataclysm Epoch, he was no stranger to that term as a historian. It was the name of the third epoch.

After his recent revision, Klein even knew that the third epoch was separated into two eras: the Glorious Era and the Cataclysm Era.

"A second Blasphemy Slate?" Audrey plainly revealed her ignorance on the matter.

Before she calmed her emotions, she returned to her Spectator state.

Nice question! Klein secretly cheered for Miss Justice.

It was a question inconvenient for him to ask as The Fool.

Alger stole a glance at The Fool and noticed that his posture remained the same, nor did he make a sound. Hence, he thought and answered, "The first Blasphemy Slate appeared in the Dark Epoch, which is the second epoch where we humans struggled to survive under the protection of gods. The second Blasphemy Slate appeared at the end of the third epoch. It could even be said that its appearance symbolized the end of the Cataclysm Epoch.

"The content of the two Blasphemy Slates is kept secret by the seven major churches. I only know bits and pieces of it. I only know that they involve the paths of the divine, but I am not sure of the differences between them."

"Was the Blasphemy Slate that Emperor Roselle saw the first or the second?" Audrey asked curiously.

Upon hearing that, Klein recalled what Alger said about the potion names during the first Gathering. He said that the names of the Sequence potions were derived from the Blasphemy Slate!

Similarly, Captain had also mentioned that the formation and completion of the potion system was thanks to the birth of the Blasphemy Slate… That

indirectly confirms that the paths of the divine *are the Sequence pathway!* Klein answered his earlier question silently.

Then Alger simply replied, "The second one."

The glint in Audrey's eyes diminished and she returned to her Spectator state. She did not continue asking questions; instead, all she did was focus her gaze on The Hanged Man.

It was obvious that her scrutiny made Alger uncomfortable, but he suppressed the emotions within him. He lowered his voice and continued, "During the Solomon Dynasty in the Fourth Epoch, although the Antigonus family was considered an illustrious part of the aristocracy, they didn't do anything very memorable until they supported the establishment of the Tudor Empire. They then stood right in the middle of the stage of Northern Continent.

"In that period, Antigonus, Amon, Abraham, Jacob, and others were illustrious names of the human kingdom. However, after the War of the Four Emperors, the Blood Emperor from the Tudor Empire perished. They fell from the top of their pedestal and are now hunted by the seven deities.

"I am not sure about the actual process, but I do know that the Antigonus family was destroyed at the hands of the Church of the Evernight Goddess. Mr. Fool, if you'd like to know more, I am afraid that you can only obtain the information from the Church of the Evernight Goddess or from the few ancient secret organizations. You know which few I am referring to."

I don't… Klein nodded while feeling bitter inside.

"Okay."

The Secret Order is one. Captain and Old Neil mentioned the Moses Ascetic Order. I wonder if the Psychology Alchemists count…

While he mentally checked off the candidates, Alger provided him with the last bits of information.

"I similarly have no idea which Sequence pathways the Antigonus family held. There are only two adjectives that appear repetitively in the descriptions of the Antigonus family, and those are "strange" and "terrifying."

Strange and terrifying… Thinking back to the notebook, the original Klein and his classmates, and what happened to Ray Bieber's mother, it really is aptly worded… Klein continuously rapped the edge of the long table with the tip of his finger a couple of times.

Then, he slowly began to speak.

"Very well, I am satisfied with the payment."

The reason he continuously rapped the long table lightly with his fingers was to emphasize the action, to make Justice and The Hanged Man believe that he had a habit of rapping in order to conceal the fact that the same motion was used to activate and deactivate his Spirit Vision.

"It's my pleasure." Alger did not say anything else.

Audrey took a look at The Hanged Man and then The Fool. She smiled faintly and said, "Then, I shall ask the second question: what is the name of the subsequent potion for Spectator? Where can I find the clues?"

I'd also like to ask so straightforwardly, but different choices lead to different difficulties… Klein did not speak but cast his gaze towards The Hanged Man.

Alger remained silent for a few seconds before saying, "I'll answer the question for free because I led you on this pathway.

"The subsequent Sequence for Spectator is Sequence 8 Telepathist. The ancient name of Sequence 7 is Psyche Analyst but is called Psychiatrist now. This is what I found out from a member of the Psychology Alchemists. I think they should have quite a number of potion formulas for this pathway."

Psychology Alchemists… Spirit Medium Daly was rather approving of their theory, but Captain thought of them as evil and crazy… Klein listened while in deep thought.

"Do you know the whereabouts of that particular Psychology Alchemists member?" asked Audrey as her eyes beamed with joy.

Be it Telepathist or Psychiatrist, both names appealed to her aesthetics.

Alger gave a rare laugh.

"I do. He's immersed in the seas around Sonia Island. I sank him with my own hands.

"If you would like to look for the Psychology Alchemists, I have to apologize since I severed the clues."

He was not worried that Justice would find his identity through his description because he did that on his own, out of the public eye.

"Sank…” Audrey was at a loss how to reply or what expression to wear.

She drew a deep breath and suddenly failed to maintain her Spectator state. She asked bashfully, "The third question. If—and I'm saying if—a normal animal were to drink a Sequence 9 potion, what would happen?"

What kind of a question is that? Klein tapped his glabella unnoticeably with his finger that was supporting his forehead.

Very quickly, he saw the changes in color and noticed that Audrey's emotions had turned frantic, nervous, and a little ashamed.

Could she have done something that stupid? Klein was astounded, but didn't find it strange.

After the past two Gatherings, he was certain that Miss Justice was quite an airhead.

The Hanged Man, Alger, was obviously dumbfounded as well. He took a while to reply.

"Normal animals do not have the brains of humans. They wouldn't be able to learn Cogitation in a timely manner. Therefore, it would most likely lead to immediate death or a breakdown into a monster. However, if they survived the initial ingestion of the potion, they should become an extraordinary creature. If the potion has the ability to enhance their intelligence, they can even become smarter."

"Alright." Audrey breathed out a silent sigh and nodded while saying with a relaxed tone. "I have no other questions."

Alger considered for a moment and did not mention matters regarding the Aurora Order or the Listener. Similarly, he shook his head and said, "Nor do I."

"I have something." Klein didn't change his posture but said with a smile, "It will require your cooperation."

He had yet to turn off his Spirit Vision, and he immediately saw that The Hanged Man was showing signs of nervousness, while Miss Justice was too simple-minded to show fear or carefulness.

Before they could reply, Klein comforted them, "Don't worry. It's trivial. If it succeeds, it will be beneficial to you, so I wouldn't be paying extra remuneration."

"Go ahead." Audrey instinctively entered the Spectator state, but she couldn't see through the thick gray fog engulfing The Fool.

"As you will," Alger replied, steadying himself.

Klein moved his fingers and smiled when he said, "Previously, I said that we would do some experiments to enable you to ask for a leave of absence. That way, you do not have to worry if you have to be somewhere inappropriate on a Monday afternoon."

"That's our wish." Audrey loosened her tightly knitted eyebrows.

Alger thought and said, "What do you need us to do?"

"You could try a piece of ritualistic magic during your free time. It need not be too formal. As long as you are in an environment that won't be disturbed… Put four brand new candles on an altar, placed on four corners respectively. It's best if they are candles with a sandalwood scent. Put a loaf of white bread near the candle on the top left corner, a bowl of Feynapotter noodles near the candle on the top right corner, paella by the candle on the bottom left corner, and a Desi pie by the candle on the bottom right corner… Use a silver knife to make a sealed spiritual environment…"

Klein described his modified version of the luck enhancement ritual and taught Miss Justice how to create a spiritual environment for free.

To be frank, as the ritual was targeted at himself, Klein believed that the former part, which was intended to attract the interest of an entity, could be omitted completely. However, he still worked hard to make the procedure seem important. Of course, it didn't comply with what Old Neil taught about gods being second and oneself being third.

"…Mix moon flowers, gold mint, slumber flowers, fingered citron, and rock-rose together then distill it. Extract it for its essential oil, then pour a drop onto each candle…"

Audrey listened with piqued interest as she recorded all that he said. When he was done, she asked, "What about the incantation? Mr. Fool, what's the corresponding incantation?"

Alger stopped writing with the fountain pen in his hand as well. He turned his head to look at The Fool.

Klein, who was immersed in the gray fog, tapped the edge of the long table with his finger lightly and said calmly and monotonously in Hermes, "The Fool that doesn't belong to this era, you are the mysterious ruler above the gray fog; you are the King of Yellow and Black who wields good luck…”

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CHAPTER 61
STRANGE SYMBOL

"The Fool that doesn't belong to this era… the mysterious ruler above the gray fog… King of Yellow and Black who wields good luck…" Audrey Hall recited the three descriptions to herself silently. She suddenly felt a tumultuous wave of emotion go through her, preventing her from maintaining her Spectator state.

As an enthusiast of mysticism, she had learned Hermes that was used in rituals and had tested out the rituals that fellow noble enthusiasts mentioned in private gatherings before she was pulled into the gray fog or made formal contact with Beyonder powers.

None of those rituals had any effects, but they had given Audrey a basic understanding of the structure of incantations.

Thus, she knew clearly what these three incantations described and signified.

The descriptions usually described one of the seven gods that looked over this world!

Thus, The Fool's incantation was claiming status equal to the Lady of Crimson, Mother of the Secrets, and the Empress of Disaster and Horror!

Is Mr. Fool the unknown, mysterious, powerful, godlike entity that Glaint spoke of? The source of danger that we must avoid in rituals? Audrey quickly recalled the comments made during the strange rituals which she and her friends did not dare attempt back then. She was momentarily at a loss for words.

Alger Wilson, who knew and understood much more than Audrey, shivered from the bottom of his heart.

If the ritualistic magic which Mr. Fool designed truly points to him to allow him to accept our requests, w-we would have to be addressing him with Him. He is to be addressed in the third person, which is reserved for gods…

How lucky, how smart I was to act in concert with him and not do anything foolish. Even when I was testing him, I did not step beyond the boundaries of normalcy…

Could he perhaps be an ancient, mysterious, horrifying existence, only that he does not appear before us in his true form and name… The Primordial Demoness, the Hidden Sage, or the true Creator which many mysterious churches believe in?

Alger understood that The Fool he was looking at now might not be his true form. He might not even have a gender or be a humanoid creature.

Klein propped his forehead up with one hand and tapped on the table with the other hand. He acutely noticed the changes happening to The Hanged Man and Justice.

But he acted as though nothing happened, as if everything was within his expectations. He continued without any care.

"I pray for your help.

"I pray for your loving grace.

"I pray for you to give me a good dream.

"Moon flower, an herb that belongs to the red moon, please bestow your powers to my incantation!

"Fingered citron, an herb that belongs to the sun, please bestow your powers to my incantation."

…

He finished describing the incantations that belonged to another type of ritual. After he was done, he smiled.

"Lady, sir, have you memorized it?"

"Ah…” Audrey exhaled. She quickly covered her mouth and recalled seriously.

With her improved memory as a Spectator, she quickly processed the information and repeated the incantations as a form of confirmation.

Alger acted more normally. His pen did not stop for a moment, no matter what he was thinking about.

After Klein confirmed that Audrey was correct, he smiled and said, "If this test is successful, then we shall modify the ritual next time to achieve what we want to do."

"I hope that you will have the time to complete the ritual no later than Wednesday. "

He intended to come in here again on Thursday night to ascertain if the ritualistic magic was successful.

As for why he did not allow The Hanged Man and Justice to directly request a leave of absence, Klein was worried that he would be unable to discern if the results were from them asking for leave or merely the outcome of an attempt of the ritualistic magic. Was he to pull them into the Gathering if that happened?

"By your will." Audrey and Alger replied respectfully, collecting themselves.

"According to The Hanged Man's suggestion last week, we shall have a time for casual conversation after all official issues have been discussed. Who shall begin?" Klein gave a hand gesture signaling for someone to start.

Audrey sighed and said, "Mr. Fool, the suggestion you made regarding the exam selection and the separation between civil and political matters has received the approval of many members of parliament. Perhaps it could become a reality. Of course, with the efficiency of this government, the bill will only appear half a year from now at the earliest."

She was not worried that The Hanged Man would track her down using this piece of information. She had intentionally and intermittently dropped hints and guided those proud wives to think that they had conceived the idea. Those ladies had rushed to tell their husbands, their fathers, and their brothers.

At that moment Audrey felt as though she was watching a flock of golden peacocks showcasing their tail feathers.

She believed that those women would drill it in themselves that they came up with the idea to claim the glory for themselves. They would soon forget about what Audrey's role in the matter was, fighting among themselves to see who thought of the suggestion first.

Using this remarkable way to change the system of a kingdom gave Audrey a weird sense of satisfaction, as if she had found a way for a Spectator to influence the plot of a play.

"Let's hope so," Alger replied sarcastically.

He paused for a few seconds, then glanced at The Fool. He deliberated before saying, "In recent decades, the amount of activities of the various secret organizations has seen an upward trend. In fact, there are even new

secret organizations appearing, some of them having reached scale with a good number of Beyonders."

Are you trying to ask me for the reason? I have not even gained access to information about illegal organizations… Klein merely smiled without commenting on The Hanged Man's news. He changed the subject and said vaguely, "An ancient power is about to wake from its slumber."

For example, the power represented by the Antigonus family diary…

"Is that so…" Alger muttered softly to himself, as though he recalled something.

Klein swept his gaze toward The Hanged Man, then past Justice and said with a smile, "If there is nothing else to share, then let's end today's gathering here."

"By your will." Audrey and Alger stood up together.

Klein moved his finger and severed his connection with the dark red stars. He watched as the two figures vanished from the magnificent palace.

He stood up and turned toward his own chair which was also the back of the Seat of Honor at the bronze table. He looked at its symbol.

Radiant stars formed a strange symbol. It was not a symbol that fit anything in Klein's present understanding of mysticism.

He observed it closely before identifying the "Pupil-less Eye," a symbol representing secrecy. He also saw contorted lines that represented change. Each of the symbols were missing a portion and were overlapped with each other, creating a new symbol.

An incomplete secret and an incomplete change… What do we get when we add them together? Klein creased his brows and muttered to himself, unable to come up with an answer.

He retracted his gaze and walked along the ancient, magnificent palace. His eyes scanned every corner of the palace.

"Back when I casually imagined this place, it was merely a rough concept; I did not describe the shape of the palace, table, or chairs… Where does this design come from? The best choice? The first prototype? Or are they a reflection of reality?" Klein suddenly had a question he neglected previously as he looked at the palace.

Sigh, I have to say that even though I am a keyboard warrior, I am lacking experience in many areas. I am also not observant enough, to the point of only realizing this question now… With such a self-reflection, Klein made a serious effort to examine every corner of the palace, but did not find any other living things or anything strange.

Klein did not dare to venture deeper, which seemed to be an illusory land without boundaries. He was afraid that he would end up completely lost.

Wow, this place is indeed filled with mysteries… Who knows if there will be any changes to this area when I become more powerful… Klein sighed. He unleashed his spirituality and enveloped himself within, causing him to feel the rapid rush of plummeting.

Everything flew past quickly. All kinds of illusions shattered. He tore through the grayish-white fog and saw reality. He saw the table, curtains, and clothes rack in his room.

…

Backlund, Empress Borough.

Audrey saw the oil painting that hung on the wall. She felt the softness the down-feathered pillow under her head provided.

She did not stand up immediately; instead, she seriously recalled what had happened during the gathering, as if she was watching a play she had

already watched.

"Mr. Fool had a certain confidence in his tone when he told us to try the ritual and gave us the descriptions of the mysterious ruler, the King of Yellow and Black… Confidence…" Audrey exhaled as she was analyzing this silently, her body shuddering slightly.

Forget it, since I cannot fight it, there's no need to think too much about it… Mr. Fool has always appeared friendly; he should be an entity that has a respect for order… Audrey's mood improved rapidly. She thought about her acting, and the weakening backlash of the potion.

She hummed a merry tune and got off her bed. She walked toward the door and adjusted her state of mind, taking on her state as a Spectator.

As she opened the door of the room, she saw a maid walking past. She saw the old calluses on her hands, the marks on her face, and other similar details. She could deduce many things from these observations.

At this point, Audrey had a strange feeling. She quickly turned to look at the shaded corner of the balcony.

She saw her golden retriever Susie sitting there, silently observing her, just like how she observed the maid.

My Goddess… Audrey's lips twitched as she sighed. She wanted so much to hide her face.

…

On the Sonia Sea, in the heavily protected captain's quarters.

Alger woke up and noticed that nothing had changed around him. It was as if nothing had happened.

He sighed and thought to himself, *An ancient existence?*

…

Klein, who had exited the ritual, pulled open the curtains. He took out his notebook and began writing once again.

He recalled the contents of Emperor Roselle's diary, hoping to reinforce the memory through writing and prevent himself from forgetting it in the future.

Klein reread the notes several times after he finished writing. Finally, he tore the notes up and incinerated them.

I shouldn't forget the most salient points if I do this once a week. But with time and the increasing complexity of my missions… How unfortunate, I do not have better ideas for the time being. I have not learned any cryptography… Klein collected himself and stretched his neck. He planned on heading to the Divination Club.

A Seer was defined differently by different people. No one could say that another person's methods were wrong. So, Klein, who did not know which kind of Seer fit the requirements of the potion, could only correct it as he experimented to ascertain which one was the best fit!

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CHAPTER 62
THE SEER'S SUGGESTION

Before Klein left home, he took the time to meticulously clean up his suit and top hat with a small brush and a handkerchief. Then, he washed his white shirt, changing into a similar linen shirt along with the only decent cheap coat he had. He then briskly walked out onto the street.

First, Melissa's dress. Then, Benson's suit. Only then can I consider a second suit for myself. Money is never enough… Besides, we need to save money to buy porcelain tableware to receive our guests… Plus, I have to save money to buy a variety of materials related to mysticism… Klein sat on the public carriage and took note of the financial status at home. The more he did the math, the more he shook his head.

He reckoned he needed at least a year to let himself, his brother, and his sister live as a middle-class family.

Of course, that was without taking promotions and pay rises into consideration.

The public carriage drove past the streets and stopped opposite to the Divination Club on Howes Street.

Klein pressed down on his black top hat and hopped off the carriage. He walked along the familiar street and entered the club located on the second floor. He then saw the beautiful brunette, Angelica.

There was a hint of swelled redness to her eyes, but she looked extremely relaxed.

Klein raised his hand to tap his glabella lightly and carefully examined her. He found out that the grayness deep in Angelica's emotional colors had greatly dispersed. It had been replaced with sunlight-like whiteness.

After taking it in, Klein walked over, took off his hat, and smiled.

"Madam Angelica, it's a lovely day today, isn't it?"

Angelica lifted her head and was briefly shocked. She then beamed and said, "You are just like Mr. Vincent's cat. You don't make any sounds while walking, do you? You managed to tell? Hehe, I forgot that you are a fortune-teller skilled in face-reading…"

She paused, then she gently bit her lip before bowing.

"Thank you. Thank you for your suggestion yesterday. I feel much better. I haven't been this relaxed, happy, and contented in a year."

Upon hearing her show her sincere gratitude, Klein was infected with the joy and happiness she had. The corner of his lips lifted, and he said, "It's my pleasure."

As he spoke, he could feel his spirituality relax and turn livelier.

Is this what the Seer potion wants? A Seer that can really help the inquirer? Klein pinched his glabella as though he was thinking before secretly tapping twice.

It had to be said that he found the action of activating and deactivating his Spirit Vision in practice insufficiently inconspicuous. However, the problem was that he hadn't thought of a better solution yet. As he had just become a Seer recently, his spiritually had yet to reach its limit, and the same was applied to his mastery. Hence, there didn't seem to be many suitable locations for an activation switch for his Spiritual Vision. The glabella was the best option by far.

When I become a true Seer after fully digesting the potion, I should be able to design a more inconspicuous activation motion… Klein nodded unnoticeably and walked towards the half-opened meeting room.

"Coffee or tea?" Angelica asked hurriedly.

"Desi coffee." Klein answered. He planned on trying out all the drinks the Divination Club had to offer.

Then, he saw that there were six or seven members present, but not Hanass Vincent who was almost always was.

"Mr. Vincent isn't here?" Klein stopped in his tracks and asked a passing question.

Angelica was taken aback as she said, "Mr. Vincent doesn't come every day. He accepted an invitation to give a lecture for a divination organization at Enmat Harbor. Are you looking for him?"

"Not at all. I was just curious. After all, I've seen him every time I've come here." Klein shook his head with a smile.

Meanwhile, he realized that there was a familiar face among the seven members present.

Glacis, who had divined for him before, was present!

Glacis was reading some information on the table with his monocle when he suddenly sensed someone looking at him. He lifted his head and cast his gaze.

Obvious joy suffused his face as he propped himself up with both hands and stood up. He dashed towards Klein and stopped before him.

"Good afternoon, Mr. Moretti. I have been wondering if you would come today.

"I heard from Angelica that you are not a doctor, but a fortune-teller who is good at face-reading?"

Klein smiled.

"That's not the only thing I'm good at. Mr. Glacis. You no longer seem plagued by your ailment?"

He pinched his forehead and tapped his glabella twice. He noticed that Glacis's health colors had returned to normal.

"Yes, I was very regretful for not taking your suggestion back then. Luckily, there is a very amazing apothecary near my place. He gave my wife a magical medicine which brought me away from death," Glacis said emotionally.

As a quasi-member of the Nighthawks, Klein asked out of occupational interest, "Very amazing apothecary? Very magical medicine?"

Magical? How magical? Is it within the range of Beyonders?

"He said that it was a kind of folk medicine from Lenburg. In short, it helped with treating my illness a lot," Glacis answered, without noticing anything abnormal about the question.

Folk medicine apothecary? Klein tapped his glabella as though he was thinking.

"What's his name? Where does he stay? As you know, even a fortune-teller can't guarantee that they would remain in the pink of health all the time. Perhaps, I will need to go to purchase some medication from him in the future."

Klein learned from his teacher and classmates that the current health system in the world was in a nascent state. There was almost no cure to many diseases, so the magical medications and miraculous apothecaries still

controlled the market. There was no harm in knowing more, since it could one day serve useful.

Glacis answered honestly, "His name is Lawson Darkwade. He has a tiny store at 18 Vlad Street in East Borough, named Lawson's Folk Herb Store."

"Thank you." Klein remembered it and spoke sincerely.

Glacis turned around and invited him to sit beside him. At that moment, Angelica came over to serve the coffee she brewed.

Compared to Southville coffee, Desi coffee is more fragrant, but has quite an inferior taste… Klein took a sip and savored it for a moment.

Glacis hurriedly deliberated his words when he saw Klein put down his white porcelain cup.

"Mr. Moretti, can I request a divination from you? I will pay according to a price you set."

"Eight pence is sufficient. I will not raise the price out of the blue." Klein was hoping that someone would request his divination services. "Do you need a divination room?"

"Alright. Topaz." Glacis led the way with much more familiarity.

After entering the divination room and locking the door, Klein sat behind the long table. He asked in a serious voice, "Mr. Glacis, what would you like the divination to be about?"

"I have an investment opportunity, but the amount of money it involves is huge. If it fails, my family and I will take a heavy hit. I wish to know if it will be a successful investment." Glacis volunteered the information. "I have divined using tarot cards previously. Hmm, a divination after purifying my soul. The result was pretty good. Yes, I did the interpretation myself, but I did not violate the principles of those symbols."

Klein thought and asked curiously, "It'd be great if you could describe the entire situation once more and give me your information again. It'd be best if you have the other party's information, too. We will do an astrolabe divination."

"Alright." Glacis organized his words and said, "When Mister Lanevus examined the Hornacis mountain range, he discovered a gigantic mine rich in high-quality iron ore. He poured in all his savings to buy that land and hired a professional company to survey it. The result was a heartening one."

"He lacks funds needed for subsequent developments, so he formed a steelworks company and intends to apply for a loan from the bank using the project. At the same time, he will also issue a corresponding number of shares to raise its initial capital. The plan is still in its preparatory stage and promises fat returns."

Klein, who had been reading the newspaper recently and also happened to be a "history expert," knew that there were shares in this world. He also knew that the concept of shares was derived from Emperor Roselle. *Yeah, him again.*

During the colonization of the Southern Continent, he had set up the West Balam company and solved the nation's fiduciary matters successfully by raising funds from the public through the issue of shares. As such, he had the first-movers advantage from colonization.

Because the returns were great, this development continued on. For example, there were railway shares, mining shares, steam development shares, and so on and so forth. There were some that succeeded and there were some that failed. Hence, it catalyzed the formation of organizations like the Backlund Stock Exchange.

Besides that, the Emperor Roselle had created national bonds, unit trusts, and other financial products. The former had become the most stable form investment, with a return of four to six percent interest.

Klein remembered that Benson had once said that if he could inherit three thousand pounds, there was no need to work hard any further. The stable annual interest of about five percent would result in an annual fixed income return of 150 pounds, roughly equivalent to Klein's annual income at present.

This is known as rentier capitalism… Klein sighed and asked carefully, "Are you sure there's nothing wrong about this? Is Lanevus trustworthy?"

"I've seen his property papers and the inspection report. There is the Sivellaus county government's stamp and an endorsement of a professional company. Plus, inside Mr. Lanevus's office is a group photo of him with Sir Deweyville and the Mayor." Glacis nodded in reply.

Group photo? That doesn't mean anything… Klein, who was born in an era of information explosion, had seen too many similar incidents. He didn't buy the story because of that.

However, it didn't matter if he believed it or not. He could only pick up a pen and draw a corresponding astrolabe according to the crucial time and information that Glacis had provided him with.

After a long while, Klein pointed to the astrolabe and said, "You should be able to tell that this will be a very unsuccessful endeavor. Below the flourishing surface is a cliff, a chasm. My divination suggestions going around it, to avoid it."

"…” Glacis fell into silence, his mouth turning agape a few times before he closed it.

A few minutes later, he said with a rueful smile, "I'll consider it carefully when I'm back."

Upon hearing this answer, Klein could only shake his head with a silent sigh. He realized the helplessness of a Seer.

A Seer could only give suggestions and not make the decision for others.

Just as the two left the Topaz room, Angelica walked over and said, "Mr. Moretti, someone wishes for your divination."

When she said that, she added with a whisper, "He did not ask for my recommendations. Nor did he view the album."

Has my reputation spread? Klein turned towards the reception hall in puzzlement.

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CHAPTER 63
DREAM INTERPRETATION

Klein proceeded a few steps forward and saw the client. He was dressed in a formal black suit and a halved top hat. He held a gold-inlaid wooden cane and his short blond hair flared from the sides. His nose was aquiline like a hawk's beak.

Anna's fiancé… The Joyce Meyer that went through a terrifying ordeal. Klein, who had seen him in his dream divination, immediately greeted with a smile, "Good afternoon, Mr. Meyer."

"Good afternoon, Mr. Moretti." Joyce took off his hat and bowed in greeting. "Thank you for the advice you gave Anna. She cannot stop praising how miraculous you are."

Klein chortled and said, "I did not change a thing. You should be thanking yourself. Without your determination and your hope for a better tomorrow, you wouldn't have been able to overcome such an ordeal."

After the exchange of pleasantries, Klein could not help but lampoon inwardly.

Does this count as mutual professional bootlicking?

"In all honesty, I still find my coming back alive a dream. I still cannot believe that I survived wave after wave of terrifying ordeals." Joyce shook his head wistfully.

Without waiting for Klein's reply, he asked curiously, "You knew who I was the moment you saw me. Was that because of my unique nose, or because

you divined that I would visit you?"

"I had your detailed information. That is enough for a seer," Klein answered vaguely, behaving like how a charlatan would.

Joyce was indeed stunned. More than ten seconds later, he squeezed a smile.

"Mr. Moretti, I wish to request a divination from you."

The moment he finished his sentence, he suddenly realized something.

Mr. Klein Moretti had addressed himself as a seer, not a fortune-teller. A seer!

"Alright, let us head to Topaz." Klein gestured.

At that moment, he felt as though he should have worn a long black robe. He tried to keep his words to a minimum to accentuate the mystique of a seer.

Joyce Meyer locked the door behind him after entering the divination room. While he observed his surroundings, Klein seized the opportunity to tap his glabella twice and activated his Spirit Vision.

Joyce sat down and set his cane down beside him. He pulled on his black bow tie and said hoarsely, "Mr. Moretti, I wish for you to interpret my dream."

"Dream interpretation?" Klein acted as though it was within his expectations, but was merely asking for confirmation.

He saw that the colors representing Joyce's health were dull, but none of them signified an impending illness. The colors symbolizing his emotions were predominantly blue, and its darkness showed that he was obviously high strung.

Joyce nodded seriously.

"I have had the same horrific dream every night ever since the Alfalfa arrived at Enmat Harbor. I know that this could be associated with the trauma of the ordeal and that I should go see a psychiatrist, but I suspect that this is no ordinary dream. A normal dream would definitely have some details that are different even if they recur every night, but this dream is, at the very least, constant in the parts which I can recall."

"To a seer, these kinds of dreams are seen as revelations given by the divine," Klein said, half consoling and half explaining. "Can you describe the dream to me?"

Joyce clenched his fists and held it to his mouth. He thought deep for a moment before saying, "I dreamed that I was falling from the Alfalfa into the ocean. The ocean was dark red, as if it was filled with rotting blood.

"As I fell, I was grabbed by a person on the boat. I could not identify him, but I know that he was very strong.

"And I was also holding onto a person in an attempt to save him from falling into the sea. I know that person. He was a passenger of the Alfalfa, Younis Kim.

"Because of his weight and his struggling, I could not bear the weight and could only release my hands and watch him get devoured by the sea of blood.

"At that moment, the person above me also released his hand. I flailed my arms, hoping to grab onto something, but there was nothing. I could only plummet rapidly.

"Then I wake up in horror, sweat covering my back and forehead."

Klein held his forehead and gently rapped it as though he was thinking. He then organized his words and said, "Mr. Meyer, nightmares, similar

nightmares, and repeated nightmares, these are all psychological problems and have a corresponding source. The same nightmare recurring time and time again is a reminder from your spirituality. It is also a revelation given to you by the divine."

Upon seeing Joyce appearing confused, he elaborated, "Do not have any doubt, an ordinary person's spirituality is also capable of giving reminders.

"I do not know what exactly happened on the Alfalfa, but I can see that it was a tragedy of blood and steel. It has left a deep trauma in you."

Seeing Joyce nod slightly, Klein continued, "You must have been very horrified, very fearful on the ship. It is easy for a person to lose their observational skills when overwhelmed by such intense emotions; thus missing signs that they should not have been missed. This does not mean that you have not seen those signs, but you have disregarded them, you understand? Disregarded.

"In your subconscious, in your spirituality, the details that you have missed are present all the same. If the thing that the detail is pointing toward is important enough, then your spirituality will remind you in the form of a dream."

Previously, I had similar case of disregarding a feeling, only to later realize that the diary was with Ray Bieber… But I was more sensitive and had stronger spirituality. I was also more knowledgeable about mysticism and thus could make a deduction more quickly… Klein paused for a few seconds and looked into Joyce Meyer's eyes.

"Did Mr. Younis Kim, who you let fall into the sea of blood, requested you of something on the boat, but was ultimately unable to escape his fate?"

Joyce fidgeted his body unnaturally. He opened his mouth several times before answering, "Yes, but I do not pity him. Perhaps a few days or a week from now, you will see in the newspapers how cruel and evil he was. He raped and murdered at least three ladies and tossed a baby into the Berserk

Sea. He also led a bunch of savages who had lost their rationality and brutally massacred the passengers and crew of the boat.

"He was scheming, strong, and evil. I did not dare, nor could I stop him. I would only have forfeited my life."

"I am not doubting what you did," Klein said, making clear his stand. Then he explained, "But your dream is telling me that you are feeling regret and sorry. You believe that you should not have released your hand back then. Since you believe that killing him was an act of justice, then why are you feeling regret and sorry for it, so much so that you have recurring dreams about you releasing your hand?"

"I don't know either…" Joyce shook his head, confused.

Klein crossed his hands and placed it under his chin. He attempted to analyze the situation.

"Incorporating what I just described, it seems you have missed certain details. For instance, anything that Younis Kim mentioned, his contents of his plea, the way he presented himself, et cetera. I cannot recall the incident for you, so please think about it carefully."

"There's nothing… All he could say back then was 'spare me, I surrender'…" Joyce muttered in puzzlement.

Klein did not know exactly what happened, so he could only guide him based on what he understood from the dream.

"Perhaps you felt that Younis Kim was more useful alive, that he could prove something or to explain something?"

Joyce knitted his brows. It was a while before he said, "Perhaps… I still find the conflict that arose on the Alfalfa happened too suddenly and turned intense too quickly. It was as if the passive evil in everyone's heart just erupted uncontrollably… It was too abnormal, very abnormal… Perhaps—

perhaps I wished to interrogate Younis Kim why he acted as though he was possessed by the devil in the first place…”

Klein suddenly had a stroke of inspiration after hearing Joyce's dreamy description. He spoke mysteriously with a tone unique to charlatan's.

"No, that's not the only reason."

"What?" Joyce seemed shocked.

Klein crossed his hands and held his chin up. He stared straight into Joyce's eyes and said with a slow, yet forceful tone, "Not only did you find the matter abnormal, but you also saw some things that you disregarded. And putting together these things that you disregarded results in a terrifying conclusion.

"Your spirituality is telling you that there is someone who should be under the highest suspicion. And that person is the one who had grabbed you but ultimately released his hand in the dream. You do not suspect him subconsciously, and thus you are unable identify him. He is your partner. He once had control over your fate, or maybe, even saved you before!"

Joyce leaned back suddenly, slamming into the back of the chair with a dull thud.

His forehead slowly became laced with sweat, his eyes filled with confusion.

"I… I see it…”

Joyce suddenly stood up noisily, causing his chair to wobble and nearly fall.

"Mr. Tris…” He used all the energy in him to utter the name.

He was a friendly and bashful little boy with a round face. He was the hero that saved the survivors…

Klein did not interrupt Joyce's thoughts. He leaned back slightly and waited.

Joyce's expression changed several times, finally returning to normal, a normal that had a little paleness.

He revealed a rueful smile.

"I understand now. Thank you for interpreting my dream. Perhaps it is time for me to make a trip to the police station."

He took out his leather wallet and fished out a one-soli note.

"I do not think that money can fully represent your worth, and I can only give you the price you asked for. This is for you." Joyce pushed the note toward Klein.

I wouldn't have minded if you gave me ten pounds… One soli, you sure are like your fiancée… Klein kept up his mysterious vibe as a charlatan and said nothing, smiling as he pressed on the note.

Joyce took a deep breath, wore his hat, and turned to walk toward the door.

As he was unlocking the door, he suddenly turned back and said with sincerity, "Thank you, Master Moretti."

Master? Klein laughed to himself. He watched as Joyce left the divination room and said silently to himself, *Whatever happened on the Alfalfa seems extraordinary… If only the Captain was here. He would be able understand everything that happened in Joyce Meyer's dreams…*

…

Tuesday at dawn. Backlund, Empress Borough.

Audrey, who woke up earlier, beckoned her golden retriever Susie over. She said with a serious tone, "Susie, you are also a Beyonder now. We are the

same kind, ew—no, what I mean is that we have to help each other. Guard the door later and don't let anyone disturb me. I have to conduct a ritual."

Susie looked at her mistress and shook her tail in exasperation.

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CHAPTER 64
INSTIGATOR

After instructing her golden retriever, Susie, Audrey paced around, seemingly worried. She too was uncertain if the ritualistic magic would result in anything odd.

"Let's do this…" Her eyes turned calm as she used her state as a bystander to view the imagined process. Soon, she came to a new arrangement.

Audrey unlocked the door to her bedroom and said to Susie, "Susie, sit here. If Annie and the rest try to barge their way in, immediately go to the bathroom to inform me."

In order to prevent any accidents, her personal maidservant had the key to unlock her door.

Susie looked at her enigmatically and wagged her tail thrice.

"Very good. I will let you choose anything you want for lunch today!" Audrey pumped her fist gently.

After exhorting Susie, she entered the bathroom. The square bathtub was three to four meters on each side. There was clear water rippling gently in it with steam emitting from it. It was quite a dreamy sight.

Audrey tidied up a rectangular table with many bottles placed on it. Then, she went back out and moved candles, sacrificial items, and a white robe over.

Immediately after that, she closed the bathroom door.

With everything done, Audrey heaved a sigh of relief and picked up a translucent light-blue bottle beside the four candles.

The cylindrical bottle shimmered dreamily under the light. In it was the essence oils she had distilled from a mixture yesterday. As an enthusiast of mysticism, she had no lack of research regarding such items. She had many different kinds of extracts, flower essence, perfume, essential oils, and incense that she brewed herself at home. As such, she had already finished the initial preparations according to The Fool's instructions.

"Moon flowers, gold mint, slumber flowers, fingered citron, and rock-rose… What an odd concoction…” Audrey mumbled softly. "Oh, one has to cleanse one's body and calm their mind before engaging in ritualistic magic. This is a form of reverence to the divine—uh, to the target."

As she went through the entire process in her head, she placed the ritual's essential oil beside her bathtub. She reached out and began disrobing what she wore at home.

Pieces of her silk clothing fell into the laundry basket one after another. Audrey coiled up her hair into a bun and tested the water's temperature with her hand. Then, she carefully stepped into the bathtub, allowing her body to slowly sink into the water's warm embrace.

"Phew…” She exhaled comfortably, finding herself warm all over. She felt abnormally relaxed.

I don't even want to move a single finger… Audrey forcefully pumped herself out as she grabbed the translucent light-blue bottle beside her and dripped a few drops into the water.

A waft of fragrance dispersed, filling the silence with a refreshing smell. Audrey breathed in a few times and nodded in satisfaction.

"Not bad. It smells really good.

"How relaxing. How comfortable…

"I don't want to move at all. All I wish is to lie here in silence…

"Silence, in silence… si… lence…”

After losing her sense of time, Audrey suddenly heard barking.

She opened her eyes in shock, looking to her sides in a daze. She had no idea when Susie had opened the door and entered. She was squatting outside the bathtub, looking at her with an exasperated look.

As she rubbed the corners of her eyes, Audrey felt that the water had cooled down quite significantly.

I-I fell asleep? She subconsciously asked herself.

Susie looked at her without barking or wagging her tail.

"Haha, the effects of that bottle of ritual essential oil sure is great. Yeah, really great!" Audrey chuckled dryly as she explained with a cheerful tone.

She stood up, retrieved a towel, and as she wrapped and wiped her body, said to the golden retriever beside her, "Susie, continue keeping watch. Do not let Annie and the rest enter!"

Only when the golden retriever left did she secretly stick out her tongue. She threw her towel aside and wore a clean white robe.

After closing the door to the bathroom, Audrey recalled the ritual she had memorized.

She picked up four candles and placed them on the four corners of the table.

A loaf of white bread at the top left corner, a bowl of Feynapotter noodles at the top right corner. Smells great, but it's a little cold… No! It's not time to

think of this! Paella at the bottom left corner and Desi pie at the bottom right… Audrey set up the altar according to The Fool's descriptions seriously, shaking her head twice during the process.

After she was done with the preparation, she left her four candles lit. She picked up a silver knife and stabbed it into a pile of coarse salt.

After narrating the sacred incantation in Hermes, Audrey raised the knife with beautiful patterns and placed it into a cup filled with clear water.

After focusing her mind, she pulled out the silver 'sacred blade,' cogitating her spirituality to spew out and spread from her blade.

Invisible energy spewed out as Audrey held the knife and circled the altar once. When she felt that a spirituality wall was fully erected around her, she expelled all the uncleanliness and distractions outside.

Maintaining her Spectator state, she prevented her excitement and joy from affecting the ritual.

She put down the silver knife and picked up the tiny light-blue crystalline bottle and dripped a drop on each candle.

Sizzle!

A faint fragrance emanated as Audrey's body, heart, and soul seemed to attain tranquility.

She drew a breath as she lowered her head in reverence and began chanting the incantation in Hermes.

"The Fool that doesn't belong to this era,

"You are the mysterious ruler above the gray fog,

"You are the King of Yellow and Black who wields good luck,

"I pray for your help.

"I pray for your loving grace.

"I pray for you to give me a good dream.

"Moon flower, a herb that belongs to the red moon, please bestow your powers to my incantation!

"Fingered citron, a herb that belongs to the sun, please bestow your powers to my incantation!"

…

Right after Audrey chanted the incantation and hoped to cogitate the contents of her plea, she felt there was a stir within the spirituality wall. She saw a dark red star swirling on the back of her hand.

Her heart leaped as she hurriedly closed her eyes and calmed her heart to plead sincerely.

When everything was over, she surveyed her surroundings wondrously, but did not find anything odd.

"Is that all?" Audrey knitted her eyebrows slightly as she whispered.

…

The King of Yellow and Black who wields good luck… The Fool that doesn't belong to this era… In the Blue Avenger's captain cabin, Alger Wilson in his windstorm robe was silently reciting the three lines of description he had heard in the afternoon. He seemed to be attempting to find clues of the person's identity through it.

He shook his head and stood up in a clearly vexed manner, but ultimately did not do anything.

Alger was not at ease inside the Blue Avenger, an ancient ship that was a relic from the Tudor Dynasty. Although he was already in control of the ship, he had a gut feeling that there were still many hidden secrets, just like the Blood Emperor.

Therefore, he planned on using the ship to test The Fool's powers but did not wish to attempt the unknown ritualistic magic on the ship.

Alger ruminated for a few minutes before leaving the captain's cabin and went on deck. He said to the few sailors, "We will be reaching the Rorsted Archipelago soon. We will be anchoring there for a day."

The sailors immediately cheered as they shouted in unison, "Thank you, Your Grace!"

As the ghost ship did not need sailors, there were very few sailors on board. There was no need to worry about their supplies, being able to enjoy fresh food and clean water. However, day after day of voyaging at sea and the nearly unending vistas exhausted them both physically and mentally. It felt like they were always repressed and tolerating something until they lost control.

As for the Rorsted Archipelago, it was a famous colony on the Sonia Sea. Their business was booming, and they had all kinds of industries.

"I simply can't wait!" A crew member gyrated his hips and sniggered a meaningful laugh that all men would understand.

…

On the public carriage toward Zouteland Street, Klein, who was reading the newspapers leisurely, suddenly jolted. He seemed to hear an ethereal voice calling out to him.

Shapeless murmurs resounded in his mind as his forehead throbbed uncontrollably.

The contents of the calling that could not be heard left as fast as it came. In just ten seconds, it was gone. Klein pinched his forehead and resisted the throbbing pain deep in his brain.

Is this the murmurings of unknown existences that Old Neil mentioned? A result of having enhanced spiritual perception? Thoughts flashed through Klein's mind as he suddenly saw four black dots appear on the back of his right hand. They were like tiny inconspicuous moles.

The four black dots that stemmed from the luck enhancement ritual quickly sank, dimmed, and vanished.

Klein looked at it in surprise and had an additional guess about what had just happened.

Justice or The Hanged Man has attempted the ritualistic magic I gave them?

Was my train of thought right?

Those three descriptions have precisely pointed towards me through the mysterious space above the gray fog?

But I'm far from powerful enough. I can't hear the contents of their requests… I wonder if the information is 'stored' above the gray fog…

Yes, I should confirm it by entering tonight.

Klein felt a little perturbed and agitated. He quickly raised his newspaper and hid his face, preventing anyone from seeing the changes to his expression.

Soon, he arrived at Zouteland Street and entered the Blackthorn Security Company.

Before he could greet Rozanne, Klein saw Captain Dunn Smith walk out. He held a piece of paper with a portrait on it.

"Take a look at this internal warrant of arrest. A very cruel and vicious Beyonder has entered Tingen." Dressed in his black windbreaker, the hatless Dunn swept his gaze over and handed the piece of paper in passing.

Klein received it and the first thing that entered his vision was a portrait sketch.

The sketch was of boy with a round face. He looked amiable with a tiny hint of bashfulness and was fairly young, probably about eighteen or nineteen years old.

"Tris, a suspected Beyonder. The initial estimate is that he's a Sequence 8 Instigator and we are not eliminating the possibility that the Theosophy Order is behind it. The culprit behind the massacre of the Alfalfa… According to a witness testimony, he came to Tingen after leaving Enmat Harbor. His current whereabouts are unknown…”

Tris… Alfalfa… It's actually a crime committed by a Beyonder? Klein suddenly recalled the dream interpretation from yesterday afternoon and Joyce Meyer's description. He immediately said, "Captain, I know one of the witnesses. He might very well be an important witness."

"I know. Joyce Meyer. My help was requested by the Machinery Hivemind last night. I saw you in Joyce's dream. Many details have led to the confirmation that the Alfalfa tragedy was a result of Tris." Dunn's gray eyes looked unperturbed as he chuckled.

How uninteresting. Captain… thankfully it was my rest day yesterday and not me acting as Seer during working hours… Klein lampooned. He barely missed the horror of being caught skiving by his direct superior.

He asked instead, "Which Sequence pathway is Instigator? What kind of organization is the Theosophy Order?"

Was instigating others to kill each other the method Tris used to eliminate the side effects of the potion or was it a requirement needed to advance?

Dunn thought for a few seconds and said, "Coincidentally, it's about time for you to learn the relevant information regarding Beyonders and the mysterious organizations. You shouldn't be ordered by Old Neil to keep reading the historical documents all the time."

Captain, wasn't the reason for recruiting me to be your 'history expert?' Klein did not dare point out the problem as he nodded seriously.

"Alright."

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CHAPTER 65
BEYONDER INFORMATION

With a document signed by Dunn, Klein went underground and turned into the armory.

"Dunn is right. It's time you understand the different Beyonders and the various secret organizations." Dressed in a black classic robe, Old Neil read the note without finding it surprising. Instead, he supported the captain's decision.

He then added immediately with a smile, "After all, you will be heading to the underground market with me tomorrow night."

"Tomorrow night?" Klein did not conceal his pleasant surprise as he asked to confirm.

Old Neil nodded and said with a sigh, "I'm a person who can't sleep when in debt. I always wish to settle them as soon as I can."

You did not seem to act so previously. You left it to the last moment before using ritualistic magic to resolve the problem… So, I'm not the only one suffering from procrastination… Wait, is there a need to euphemize 'afraid to spend away the money to repay a loan?' Klein did not expose Old Neil and instead urged, "Mr. Neil, I'll be troubling you to retrieve the corresponding information from Chanis Gate."

There were mostly archaeological and historical documents in the armory. There were documents involving Beyonders and mysterious organizations, but few in number. Furthermore, they were mostly basic knowledge.

Old Neil slowly took a sip from his hand-ground coffee and smacked his lips. He then walked out the armory with the signed and stamped document. Klein watched the place on his behalf.

About ten minutes later, Old Neil returned with a huge stack of documents.

"They can only be read in here. They are not to be taken out," he warned as he placed the information on the desk.

"Alright." Klein gave a firm nod. He extended his hands and quickly flipped through the pages and did a general read through.

Very detailed… As expected of the Nighthawks's internal documents… As expected of a Church with four thousand years history or even more… Klein sighed inwardly as he glanced through the documents.

Not only did the documents introduce the various secret organizations, it also listed down many of the Sequence pathways. It was very complete. Some of them only wrote the potion name of the corresponding Sequence while others only described the Beyonder abilities of the corresponding Sequence. Some were completely missing and left blank.

While holding back his excitement, Klein found the Sequence pathway that led from Seer.

He ruffled through the pages and soon found a familiar word.

Then, his delighted expression quickly froze because there was no corresponding potion name—Sequences 7 and 8—after Seer!

Thankfully, the abilities of the two following Sequences are present… Klein silently exhaled as he calmed his mind and read the description seriously.

"Sequence 8: Potion name unknown. The corresponding Beyonder is good at fighting with artifice and very crafty."

Good at fighting with artifice? This is the next advancement of Seer? Why does it feel odd… I'm not a hunter… Am I going to become a melee mage? What does crafty mean? My intelligence is enhanced, making me good at fooling the enemy? Klein was stunned. He even suspected that the Nighthawks's information was wrong.

There were corresponding case studies appended, but he could not find a reasonable explanation despite reading it repeatedly.

He cast his gaze lower as the description of Sequence 7 entered his eyes.

"Potion name unknown. The corresponding Beyonder is good at many spells that can be quickly cast. Fuses one's body's skill and supernatural powers as one.

That's more like it! This is what an advancement of a Seer should sound like! Klein heaved a sigh of relief.

After seeing the case studies of Sequence 7, he cast his eyes to the overall description of the pathway.

"This Sequence pathway was first established by the Solomon Empire's Zaratul family. During the conflicts of the Fourth Epoch, the family was not fully destroyed. The family's name was occasionally heard in the history of the Fifth Epoch… It is suspected to be connected to the ancient organization, the Secret Order."

Zaratul? Upon seeing this name, Klein's eyes constricted.

He had just seen this name appear in the remnant diary pages of Emperor Roselle yesterday afternoon!

Roselle's acting came from a reminder by the mysterious figure known as Zaratul!

Because of that mysterious Zaratul, Emperor Roselle regretted not choosing Seer? Therefore, I was indirectly influenced, turning me into a Seer. It makes acting return to the embrace of the Seer… It feels like it was all predestined. Klein knitted his brows and felt that things were somewhat different.

Just from the logical chain, he did not feel that there was anything wrong in any aspect. However, in the domain of mysticism, pre-destiny often manifested things and involved new problems.

In addition, transmigration is quite a baffling matter… It's just confusing… And the guy I've possessed tried to commit suicide because of the lost notebook of the Secret Order… Klein thought for quite a while and had many guesses, but lacked the information needed to prove them.

Phew… After repeatedly reading the information, he finally suppressed his ideas and read the other records.

He first found the Sailor Sequence and discovered that it indeed belonged to the Lord of Storms.

For an old opponent that they haven't faced for perhaps more than two to three thousand years, the Nighthawks's internal records were rather detailed.

"Sequence 8: Folk of Rage. Ancient name—Guardian of the Windstorm. The corresponding Beyonder can release several strikes that exceed ordinary thresholds when enraged. Their strength and speed are greatly enhanced… Facing them is like facing a storm…

"Sequence 7: Seafarer. Ancient name—Windstorm Priest. The corresponding Beyonder is also a scholar of astronomy and geography. They have an intuitive grasp of magnetic fields, ocean currents, wind direction, and clouds… A boat with a Seafarer will never get lost at sea… They are even more beloved by the oceans and gain enhancements in every aspect at sea…

"They are friends of water. They can act freely underwater for more than half an hour… They can cast a limited number of water-related spells. Some are a result of their own capabilities and some are a bestowment from the Lord of Storms, for example…"

A Sequence 7 Seafarer is very powerful… Klein nodded while in deep thought.

He suspected that The Hanged Man was a Guardian of the Windstorm, if not a Seafarer. From how he has recently advanced, it was more likely he was the latter.

This also indicated in a way that The Hanged Man was either a member of the Mandated Punisher or a pirate who had been secretly absorbed by the Church of the Lord of Storms.

Impressive. Impressive… Klein flipped back a few pages and found the advancement of Spectator. He discovered that the description was identical to what The Hanged Man had said.

Sequence 9 Spectator was like a Seer. They lacked direct combat means and could only observe a target to obtain information, gleaning the true thoughts of the target. By doing so, they could provide subtle influences and guidance to cause situations to develop in a way they wish.

Sequence 8 Telepathist was the advancement of Spectator. Their observation was not only limited to superficial details, but deeper into one's aura, Ether Body, or other mysterious domains. The combination of the two allowed a Telepathist to precisely understand a person's thoughts as though they could read their minds. In front of them, it was difficult to have any secrets.

Sequence 7's Psychiatrist, which was also known as Psyche Analyst, had further enhancements above the Sequence 8 foundations. They could begin directly influencing a target. For instance, they could treat a target's

maniacal problems or alternatively, cause them to turn maniacal and lose their reason.

"A Beyonder that is very difficult to be noticed…" After reading the description, Klein made a reasoned judgment.

After understanding the relevant information concerning the Gathering members, he flipped to the Church of the God of Steam and Machinery. This was because Emperor Roselle had chosen their Savant Sequence.

"Sequence 9: Savant. The corresponding Beyonder believes that knowledge is power. They have a rough understanding of the supernatural, but are more knowledgeable about aqua regia, nitroglycerin, and complicated bolts and gears. They seem to know everything."

It is no wonder that Emperor Roselle said that this potion suited him perfectly, allowing for him to press his advantage to the fullest… Klein understood completely as he shifted his eyes down.

After several case studies, the corresponding Sequence 8 finally appeared in Klein's vision.

"Archaeologist. They possess a good deal of knowledge about history and outdoor survival, as well as forbidden knowledge about ruins. They have a strong enough body and ability to face everything…"

"Sequence 7: Appraiser. They can intuitively understand the powers and problems of most extraordinary items, and can use them while keeping danger at its lowest…"

As Klein's security clearance was insufficient, he only had access to Sequence pathways up to 7. It left him a little frustrated, but there was no other way around it. He only wished that Backlund would quickly send over the Sealed Artifact 2-049 to determine if Ray Bieber was a descendant of the Antigonus family.

That way, he would have a chance of becoming a formal member and obtain a higher security clearance.

Collecting himself, Klein read the material seriously from cover to cover. He knew that the sequences following Corpse Collector were Gravedigger and Spirit Medium. He also knew that there was no information about the Sequence 8 of the Mystery Pryer path. Not only was there no name for the potion, but even the description had been left blank. There was a name for Sequence 7 of that path: Warlock!

Sounds impressive… Klein slowly flipped the page and saw Apprentice and Marauder which Emperor Roselle had lingering thoughts for. Their records only reached Sequence 8 and nothing more.

"Sequence 9: Apprentice. Their abilities are rather strange. It can only be confirmed that this is the originating pathway of a mage. They are rarely trapped and very difficult to be stopped. They often are able to escape and pass through obstacles every time…

"Sequence 8: Trickmaster. They wield all kinds of strange but impotent spells…"

"Sequence 9: Marauder. Difficult to separate these Beyonders from ordinary bandits or thieves. Perhaps the means available to them are more impressive, but their goal of stealing riches is not for enjoyment or survival. It's more like answering a calling…"

"Sequence 8: Swindler. We have also discovered traces of Beyonders in fraud investigations. They gain enjoyment from swindling…"

Gain enjoyment from swindling… This is 'acting' in a different form, isn't it? If I had the choice, I might have chosen Apprentice… Klein silently said to himself. Suddenly, he discovered the corresponding Sequence potion of the culprit of the Alfalfa tragedy, Tris—Instigator.

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CHAPTER 66
DEMONESS SECT

"Sequence 8: Instigator. They are adept at triggering the evil desires deep in people's hearts, causing contradictions and inciting conflict, thus resulting in bloody massacres…"

The description isn't detailed enough. From the looks of it, the Nighthawks do not understand the capabilities of this potion well enough… But it does match the characteristics of the Alfalfa tragedy… Klein cast his gaze up and read the corresponding Sequence 9 for Instigator.

"Sequence 9: Assassin. Can transform their bodies in a short period of time and become light as a feather. They can also utilize vision equal to that of an eagle. Every Assassin is adept at hiding in the shadows. They have dexterous steps and have the ability to release all their strength in one blow…"

After reading the description, Klein was left completely confused.

Assassin… The advancement from Assassin is Instigator?

This advancement is just as odd as how a Seer advances to a class that is good at fighting with artifice…

Some Sequence pathways advance in a very ordinary fashion, such as Spectator. Yet, there are Sequence pathways that seem to violate intuition and logic?

Well, that might not be completely true. Perhaps I just haven't discovered some of the hidden common points…

For instance, Assassins and Instigators can both bring catastrophe to others…

But I can't figure out the advancement of Seer! Hey! Could it be of the Gandalf [1] lineage? After adding some supportive magic, the other attribute points are dumped into strength and techniques?

As Klein lampooned in a speechless manner, he silently shook his head. He flipped to the section about the secret organization, the Theosophy Order that involved Instigators.

"Theosophy Order. A secret organization that appeared in the Fifth Epoch, which is the early era of the current epoch. They believe that the mind is fundamental to a person, while the physical flesh is a cage that restrains the mind. The reason why humans do evil is a result of the physical body's influence. One has to use their spirituality to obtain knowledge, allowing the mind to gradually extricate from the body. Then, through the trials of the stars, they will eventually be separated from the material world, returning to the purest and truest self, obtaining eternal redemption."

"Therefore, many extremist members of the Theosophy Order will make destroying the bodies of others their goal, which has led to many bloody massacres… It is obvious that they possess two Sequence pathways. The first is the more common Apprentice and Trickmaster potions among their members. The other Sequence comprised of Assassin and Instigator rarely appear… There is currently no evidence that indicates that the Theosophy Order possesses Sequence 7 or higher potions.

"It is unknown how the Theosophy Order established itself. Their possible origins can only be analyzed using the two Sequence pathways. Firstly, the Apprentice and Trickmaster Sequences easily remind people of the Abraham family of the Tudor Dynasty in the Fourth Epoch. The Tamara family, tied to the Abraham family through marriage for extended periods of time, cannot be eliminated as well. Secondly, Assassin and Instigator point towards the Demoness Sect."

The Abraham, Tamara, Antigonus and Zaratul families, the Solomon Empire's Dark Emperor, the Tudor Dynasty's Blood Emperor, the Trunsoest Empire, and the Jacob and Amon families that the Hanged Man had mentioned… There are really lots of secrets buried in the history of the Fourth Epoch. There might be a lot of facts too… Klein was astounded from what he read. He had a deep appreciation for how the history of the Fourth Epoch was clouded in fog.

The outline he could see through the fog left him shuddering involuntarily. It was as though he could imagine a thriving era of Beyonders, an Epoch with blood and strangeness in a concerted dance or horror and distortion in a symphony.

Klein drew in a silent gasp and flipped through the book, but did not discover any corresponding descriptions of the Demoness Sect.

He looked up and saw Old Neil wrestling with some filter paper with his hand-ground coffee. He asked sincerely, "Mr. Neil, what organization is the Demoness Sect? I can't find any introduction about them in the documents."

Old Neil was in no hurry to respond. After wrestling with his coffee, he chuckled and said, "Your security clearance isn't high enough. Even with Dunn's permission, you would not be able to read the relevant information. It can also be said that a lot of the information is only available in the Holy Cathedral and isn't stored behind Tingen City's Chanis Gate. Perhaps wait till the day you become a captain of the Nighthawks. You would be sent to the Holy Cathedral for training and would then be able to access them.

"I do not understand much about the Demoness Sect. All I know is that they worship the Primordial Demoness. They believe that this secret existence is the true inheritor of the Creator. She was born out of the Chaos and was the earliest to be born from the Creator's body. She is also the ultimate Ender that ends everything.

"Their Sequence pathways are related to this because to obtain the favor of the Primordial Demoness and to approach this secret existence, the upper

echelons are all female. This is also why they are called the Demoness Sect.

"Anything else is not something a formal member like me will know. I've heard that the demonesses make it their mission to spread catastrophes."

Spread catastrophes… This does match the hidden commonality of Assassin and Instigator… But this Mr. Tris's future seems bleak. The subsequent potions seem to be more suited for females… Klein's nodded slightly before he continued reading the information.

After he finished reading, he realized that the secret organizations were a lot more than he imagined. But on second thought, he found it very ordinary. After all, this world had so many years of history underlying it. There was once an era when Beyonder powers were extremely active.

According to the provided information, Klein categorized the secret organizations into three based on era.

First were the ancient organizations born in the Fourth Epoch. They included but were not limited to the Moses Ascetic Order, Secret Order, and the Blood Sanctify Sect which were followers of the Devil. However, the information only mentioned the Demoness Sect once.

The second was the secret organizations early in the Fifth Epoch, the present Epoch. For instance, the Theosophy Order or the Death-worshiping Numinous Episcopate. There is also the Life School of Thought which employs a master-disciple heritage and the Rose School of Thought known among Beyonders for its bloody sacrifices.

The third category were new organizations that appeared in the recent century or two. They include the Aurora Order, the Iron and Blood Cross Order, the Element Dawn, and the Psychology Alchemists, which Klein learned about much earlier.

Apart from them, there were other organizations that did not do anything major.

"Benson and Melissa must have never imagined that the world is so dangerous… it's not only limited to wars…" Klein shook his head with a wry smile. He stacked the classified documents neatly before pushing it to Old Neil.

Meanwhile, he added silently in his heart.

Please don't let my Tarot Club be on the list…

Old Neil never suspected that a leader of a secret organization was sitting opposite to him. He chuckled and took the documents and headed to Chanis Gate.

Klein sat there and wondered if he should divine the location of Instigator Tris. But he abandoned the thought after less than twenty seconds. After all, he only had a vague idea of Tris's appearance and did not know if the name was genuine. If he could figure out his location with that, he would not be a Seer, but a Prophet!

By the time Old Neil returned, Klein had straightened his thought processes and continued his revision of mysticism studies to grasp even more forms of ritualistic magic.

He spent the day studying and revising. He did not participate in the joint operation needed for capturing Instigator Tris. He did hear that the delivery of Sealed Artifact 2-049 from Backlund had been delayed due to some reason or another. The actual time of arrival was still pending.

As he had earned nearly two soli from yesterday's divination, Klein spent ten pence to buy a two-liter barrel of Enmat Beer for Benson on the way home. He also bought some lemon cakes fresh out of the oven for Melissa.

"Klein, I know you care for us deeply, but there's no need. There's no need to keep spending money on such matters," said Benson after he saw the tiny barrel of beer and deliberating over his words.

Melissa stood beside him and nodded slightly.

This is probably how our consumerist habits differ… Klein sighed in amusement.

"Benson, Melissa, don't worry. This was bought with my additional reimbursement. Yeah, I earn an additional two to four soli every week."

I can't tell them that these are the earnings I got from doing divinations for others, right.… He added inwardly.

“…That job of yours is much better than I imagined." Benson was taken aback as he made an objective assessment.

That's right. I even learned divination from it.… Klein mused silently before turning toward the kitchen.

Under the combined efforts of the trio of siblings, a sumptuous dinner was ready for eating.

After having their fill, Klein, Benson, and Melissa lay slumped in the living hall. It took them quite a while before they got up to clean up, chat, and study.

When Benson and Melissa fall asleep, I'll head above the gray fog to see the effects of the ritual… As Klein revised his history textbooks, he shot a glance at his siblings.

…

West Borough. Iron Cross Street Lower Street.

A three-storied apartment was immersed in darkness. There were no street lamps or any additional light.

Suddenly, a figure leaped out of a window from the third floor. It landed gently on the ground like a feather without causing so much as a stir.

His body crouched and suddenly vanished as though he had blended into the shadows. All that could be seen was the outline of his body.

As he traveled quickly, the figure arrived at the harbor. He headed for a corner devoid of anything except for a pile of goods.

He seriously observed for a moment, circling the area twice before the leaving the darkness and entering the corner.

One could see his round and amiable face. He was Instigator Tris, who had single handedly caused the tragedy of the Alfalfa.

"How does it feel?" A mysterious figure wearing a black hooded robe walked out of the shadows. The hoarse voice obviously belonged to a woman.

Tris revealed a friendly and satisfied smile.

"Feels great. It was a scene I dreamed and yearned for.

"I think I have appropriately completed the mission and have taken the necessary preparations for the advancement."

The black-robed woman nodded indiscernibly and said, "Very well. According to the promise, I'll hand you the Sequence 7 formula and the three main ingredients. You will have to gather the rest by yourself."

"No problem." Tris answered, seemingly prepared.

The mysterious woman raised her hand and handed a book-like object to Tris.

The "book" had an ancient and mottled bronze exterior cover with a strange star-shaped lock on its side.

Tris knew that inside the "book" was the formula and ingredients. He instantly became thrilled.

He tried hard to compose himself as he looked curiously at the potion's name on the bronze outer cover.

"Witch!"

Tris exclaimed. He found it unbelievable that the word written in ancient Hermes was "Witch."

Witch? I'll advance to become a Witch? What a joke!

The mysterious woman covered her mouth and let out a chortle. It took her quite some time before she answered, "Weren't you always curious? Curious about why our upper echelons are all female…

"That is the answer."

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CHAPTER 67
RESPONSE

The crimson moon high in the sky hung silently in the darkness. It illuminated Tingen City, the city of universities, as it gradually fell silent.

Klein stood in front of his desk and looked through his oriel windows to see the empty Daffodil Street. He heard the sound of carriages quickly galloping far away without causing a din.

He picked up his vine-leaf patterned silver pocket watch and snapped it open. He took a glance at it and drew the curtains, making the yellowish lights of the gas lamp reflect back into the bedroom.

Klein turned around at an adequate speed, locked his room, and switched off the gas valve.

The room was immediately covered in darkness. Only a sliver of red moonlight penetrated the curtains. It gave rise to an atmosphere perfect for many late-night folk tales.

Klein took out the silver knife he had applied for. He imagined the spherical light and entered a half-Cogitation state.

He focused his mind according to his previous practice, allowing his spirituality to spew out from the tip of his blade. Then, he allowed their motion to miraculously fuse with his surroundings, sealing off the room.

He was doing it to prevent any abnormal stirrings that could wake Benson and Melissa.

Following that, Klein put down the knife and walked four steps in a counterclockwise manner. Every step was accompanied by the incantation from Earth.

The unchanging roars and murmurs inundated him. With the same mania and pain inflicted on him, he did his best to control himself and withstood the most grueling and dangerous stage in his half-conscious state.

The grayish-white fog was endless. The dark red stars were at varying distances from him. The towering divine palace stood erect like a dead giant. Nothing seemed to have changed. The silence and antiquity that had accumulated over thousands of years swarmed him.

No, there is a change! Klein silently muttered to himself. His gaze locked onto a dark red star near him.

That was the star symbolizing Justice!

The star's deep redness began to pulse. It did so with average amplitude, but did not stop.

Klein carefully spread out his spirituality towards the deep redness.

The moment the two made contact, he felt a hum in his head. He saw a blurry and distorted scene and heard the illusory but stacked voice of prayers.

"The Fool that doesn't belong to this era;

"You are the mysterious ruler above the gray fog;

"You are the King of Yellow and Black who wields good luck;

"I pray for your help.

"I pray for your loving grace.

"I pray for you to give me a good dream.

…

"I pray for you to give me a good dream.

…

"I pray for you to give me a good dream."

…

The female voice resounded constantly in an intermittent fashion. Klein's psyche turned more irritable and chaotic. It was akin to listening to someone upstairs pounding on the floor when he had just fallen asleep.

He repressed his emotions and used Cogitation to calm the urge. He carefully discerned the blurry scene that appeared before him.

It was a girl dressed in white robes. She had a head of beautiful golden hair. She was standing before four flickering flames, her head lowered as she kept chanting.

From the distorted image, Klein barely recognized her to be Miss Justice!

At this point, he confirmed that the ritual incantation he had created could precisely point towards the gray fog, towards him!

This gave him a huge sense of achievement, going from nothing to having something.

I won't praise myself for being awesome… Klein's mood turned for the better. He felt that the pleading voice that echoed in his ears like a buzzing fly was now acceptable.

With a thought, he attempted to create a response in his mind, transferring it through the intricate connection to the dark red star.

"I'm aware."

…

The gray layer emanated before him. A distorted and blurry figure stood in the deepest depths.

The spot where his eyes ought to be swirled with deep redness as his voice resounded repeatedly in the vast and empty world.

"I'm aware."

"I'm aware."

"I'm aware."

…

Audrey Hall was jolted awake suddenly. She sat up with her blanket wrapped around her as her mind was fully occupied with the scenes she saw in her dream.

She knew very well that she had dreamed of the Fool, the mysterious being that lived above the fog!

"Is this a response to my morning prayers?" Audrey, who quickly entered her Spectator state, calmed down and analyzed.

Although she did not understand why The Fool did not respond on the spot and only did so at night, she was still shocked that the ritualistic magic was effective with the few lines of incantation.

In the past, she had prayed to the Evernight Goddess, but had never received any response!

Even if Mr. Fool was not a god, he is likely not far from being one… Audrey slowly inhaled before slowly exhaling.

Since he was a powerful existence that she had no means of resisting, she quickly threw aside her worries. She began considering what to do next.

"First, I have to completely digest the Spectator potion… My acting is still pretty good.

"Second, I have to seek out the Psychology Alchemists.

"Third, I should try to obtain the Telepathist potion formula from Mr. Fool or clues regarding the Psychology Alchemists elsewhere.

"However, every godlike existence should have a complete Sequence pathway that belongs to them. They might not know the formulas of other Sequence pathways… A new Beyonder organization like the Psychology Alchemists might not be able to garner Mr. Fool's attention…"

…

With the connection severed, Klein sat at the bronze table's seat of honor in a rather good mood.

He was completely covered in gray fog. He leaned back and clenched his fist to cover his mouth. He recalled and analyzed the process.

At that moment, he was the only living being in the world of the gray fog. Apart from that, there was absolute silence.

It seems I can only pass information over and am unable to use the powers in here… From the looks of it, my idea of manipulation would not work. Klein kept prodding his mouth as he silently made a conclusion.

He had originally planned on attempting to bind his body with the world of the gray fog in the same manner if the incantation and ritual proved effective. As such, he could then leverage all the power of this mysterious space.

If that happened, he could pray to himself, and through such a manipulative manner, he could go around the limitations, the mysteries, and the danger, allowing him to fully use the gray fog world.

For example, he could first conduct a ritual and pray to "himself" for spells. Following that, he could come above the gray fog and answer his own request and bestow it.

From the looks of it, I was being too idealistic… My understanding and control of the gray fog world has not reached that level… Klein shook his head in a self-deprecating manner and planned on leaving.

At that moment, he saw the dark red star that represented the Hanged Man begin to pulse. He heard an ethereal and formless voice spread out.

"I coincidentally chanced upon The Hanged Man's ritual?" Klein nodded in thought.

He sat at the seat of honor of the long bronze table and extended his hand to tap on the star.

His spirituality spread as it touched the pulsing deep redness.

He heard The Hanged Man's heavy and repeated prayers along with a blurry scene.

The Hanged Man was draped in a pure-black robe in the scene. He stood in front of four plumes of fire. The surrounding spirituality had formed a wall, isolating him from any external influence.

Klein did not immediately respond. All he did was watch and listen silently.

“…You are the King of Yellow and Black who wields good luck;

"I pray for your help."

…

After The Hanged Man finished his prayer, he waited for a while. Seeing that there was no response, he began dismantling the spirituality wall, extinguished the candles, and tidied up the altar.

Finally, he swiped his extended hand as aqueous light spread out, making the altar table look brand new.

Water-based spell… The bestowment of the Storm… The Hanged Man is indeed at least a Seafarer… Klein nodded slightly. Before the scene vanished, he responded via the method he imagined, transmitting it through the blob of dark redness.

…

Alger Wilson was situated in the Rorsted Archipelago's City of Generosity.

He had not gone with the sailors to the famous Red Cabaret. Instead, he stayed inside the hotel and sealed the door and windows shut to attempt the ritual The Fool had described.

After familiarly finishing the prayer, Alger waited patiently for a moment, but did not receive any response.

"It seems this attempt isn't too successful… Mr. Fool needs to change methods…” He was both overjoyed, but also a little disappointed.

After everything was done, Alger planned on going downstairs for a bottle of Langsky Proof—alcohol that could aid a Folk of Rage to unleash his powers. Mandated Punishers of the Lord of Storms were rather fond of this sort of beverage.

Pulling open the door, Alger was about to walk out when his vision blurred. He saw gray fog billow in the corridor and a hazy human figure sitting in the deepest depths of the fog, as if on a high throne.

"I'm aware." The familiar deep voice reverberated around Alger's ears, causing him to freeze where he stood as his head slightly throbbed in pain.

Alger's eyes suddenly turned dark. He looked around but realized that nothing had changed. There was still the same squeaky floorboard, the same aged wall candle stands, and the same unclean corridor.

I'm aware… The voice was still resounding by Alger's ears.

His expression sank as he hit his chest lightly with his fist but did not say any words of respect to the Lord of Storms.

After a long silence, Alger's expression was restored to normal, but his gaze seemed deeper.

…

Klein did not spend too much time above the gray fog. When all the remnant voices returned to normal, he enveloped himself in his spirituality and plunged into the gray fog, plummeting into the material world.

The lights before him flew by rapidly, like the scenes of a movie played back at a speed tens of times faster than normal. After Klein felt faint, he saw curtains that let crimson moonlight through along with the blurry outlines of the desk and bookshelf.

He picked up the silver knife again and removed the spirituality wall in the room. Then, a sudden gust of wind opened the door and went through the corridor.

He was completely relieved when he saw that there were no stirrings from Benson's or Melissa's room.

This luck enhancement ritual is really indispensable for traveling [1]… It's concealed and mystical… Klein silently murmured and closed the door again, walking towards his bed.

His mission tomorrow was to head to the underground markets for Beyonder items with Old Neil.

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CHAPTER 68
MONSTER

At dusk, the setting sun cast long shadows of the carriages and horses.

Having informed Benson and Melissa that he was having dinner at the Blackthorn Security Company, Klein headed to the harbor with Old Neil on a public carriage.

He was dressed in cheap formal attire, afraid that conflict might break out in such a complicated location—if he damaged his tuxedo which he took painstaking care of, he would probably cry his heart out.

When the sunlight appeared to turn fiery, the carriage stopped. Old Neil, in his usual classic black robe and felt black hat with a rounded edge, ignored the gazes of others and walked diagonally to the Evil Dragon Bar in ahead of them.

Even though the bar was slightly far away and the heavy doors were tightly shut, Klein still heard wave after wave of rapturous shouts. They appeared to be cheering on a hero.

When he came close, he suddenly sensed something. He turned his head towards the warehouse opposite to the bar. He saw a stocky man dressed in a uniform standing at a hidden corner on the rooftop.

The man carried a huge grayish-white mechanical box and held a thick rifle in his hand.

The grayish-white mechanical box was obviously connected to the same-colored rifle via piping.

"Steam-pressured rifle?" Klein muttered in shock. He looked at Old Neil and said, "This bar can actually obtain such weapons?"

That was a military-controlled item!

Although it used extracted phlogiston [1] , the size and weight of the steam backpack were still shocking, something only a true warrior of blood and iron could withstand. The rifle had an extremely high muzzle velocity and shocking destructive power too.

Matched with a suitable scope, it was nearly equivalent to an inferior sniper rifle.

"What?" Old Neil squinted his eyes as he looked over, having a confused look too. "Did something happen here?"

Something happened? Klein surveyed his surroundings and discovered a few more men holding repeating rifles who were searching for something.

"What happened?" Old Neil approached the bar and asked the brawny man guarding its door outside.

The brawny man obviously knew Old Neil and smiled wryly.

"The bar was nearly destroyed earlier.

"Apparently a wanted man was here trying to buy materials and was recognized. And this was what resulted from it. Oh Lord, what did he do, and how dangerous was he to receive such treatment? My legs went limp seeing all those firearms, limper than after spending an entire night with Ginger Sunny!"

He did not know the identity of the wanted man, much less know that the people who came to buy materials had Beyonders mixed in.

"Wanted man? Do you know his name?" Old Neil asked in interest.

"I think it was Tris or something?" the brawny man answered uncertainly.

Instigator Tris? Klein nodded in enlightenment, having understood what was happening.

Tris did not know that Joyce Meyer had cast his suspicion on him; therefore, he had sauntered right into the market to purchase materials without heed. He was likely recognized by an informant of either the Machinery Hivemind or the Nighthawks, resulting in an intense clash.

"Was he caught?" Klein tapped his silver-inlaid black cane.

Based on the surrounding situation, likely not…

The brawny man shook his head slightly and gestured with his chin to the rooftop of the warehouse opposite him.

"He rushed out before those terrifying guys arrived. Bloody hell, I've never seen a man run faster than he did!"

You haven't seen the true skills of an Assassin, or you might be taken away to some indescribable place for further reeducation… Klein thought.

"Is the market still open?" Old Neil changed subjects and asked.

"It just restored operations," replied the brawny man affirmatively.

"That's great." Old Neil quickened his pace and extended his right hand, pushing open the heavy door.

Klein followed closely in tow and walked in. He nearly fainted at the stuffiness and smell of alcohol that inundated him.

In the middle of Evil Dragon Bar was a boxing ring. Two half-naked men were in an intense brawl and surrounding them were dozens of customers shouting and cheering on the side they supported with no lack of vulgarities.

Old Neil ignored them and led Klein around the boxing ring and walked into a billiard room at the back.

In the billiard room, there were two people holding cue sticks, having a casual conversation. When they saw Old Neil enter, they instantly fell silent for a few seconds.

After confirming the visitor's identity, they moved aside and let Old Neil and Klein pass through the secret door behind them.

After passing through a few rooms, the sight before Klein's eyes opened up. He saw a place that was about the size of a lecture hall from his previous life.

Some vendors had set up roadside stalls with bottles and cans all over. Passers-by strolled through them, either scrutinizing their goods, chatting, or comparing prices.

"They have to give five percent of their profits to Swain. Ah, he is the boss of Evil Dragon Bar, former captain of a Mandated Punisher squad and older than I am. He's someone who wishes to drink himself to his death," Old Neil explained in a garrulous manner.

Klein thought and gave an honest evaluation.

"A rather profitable business."

After all, his only expense was providing the venue and protection.

"If any item catches your fancy but you lack the money, you can borrow from Swain. But of course, he charges a very high interest…" Old Neil

trailed off as he gnashed his teeth.

As expected, it's like running a casino, they would provide usuries… Klein held his walking stick and looked around as he asked curiously, "Mr. Swain is a Seafarer?"

The captain of a Mandated Punisher squad was likely a Sequence 7.

"No, he is only a Folk of Rage. Tingen is not a coastal city, so the Church of the Goddess is much more powerful than Lord of Storms here." Old Neil scoffed. "Actually, Swain had the chance of becoming a Seafarer, but was afraid that he would lose control so he chose to give up."

Just as Klein was about to ask if the boss of the bar had any experience of nearly losing control, he suddenly felt a strange phenomenon happen on his left.

There appeared to be something hidden there, muttering and recounting.

Klein turned his head and saw a pale young man. He was wearing an old linen shirt and blue jeans that the working class normally wore. His eyes looked demoralized with a hint of craziness, and he was constantly mumbling.

"His spiritual perception is very high… or perhaps, distorted?" Klein creased his eyebrows and muttered.

It was the young man's spiritual perception that triggered his own spiritual perception!

Generally speaking, spiritual perception sensing something causes some interaction. It was nearly impossible to conceal it from others, but "others" referred to Spirit Mediums who had cast their abilities, as well as powerful figures with similar special traits. A Beyonder like Klein would actually find it hard to detect, only detecting if one's spiritual perception reached a certain heightened level, or an abnormal distortion happened.

They made eye contact and the pale young man with messy black hair walked towards him with an expression looking as though he was half-sleepwalking and half-insane.

He stopped before Klein and stared at him.

Suddenly, he guffawed.

"Haha, it's the smell of death, death… Ah!"

Before he was done talking, he suddenly screamed tragically. His eyes shut tightly as liquid with the color of blood flowed out.

"Ah! Darn it!" The young man covered his eyes and hugged his head. He struggled on the ground and only calmed down after a while. He then lay there panting.

During the entire process, not a single customer or stall vendor looked over.

Klein pressed down his halved top hat and looked at Old Neil. Klein's mouth was hanging open in shock, using his actions to demonstrate his shock and to request for advice.

"Don't mind him. He's Ademisaul, an orphan, nicknamed 'monster.' He was born with high spiritual perception, and he has always been able to see things that he shouldn't, hear voices that he shouldn't. Hence, he is always raving and often getting hurt." Old Neil shook his head as he explained.

He could tell that my body was once dead? Klein knitted his eyebrows and lowered his voice as he asked in doubt, "Haven't the Nighthawks, Mandated Punishers, or the Machinery Hivemind ever thought of taking him in?"

"No, we do not have the Sequence potion that suits him," said Old Neil with a sigh.

Right, he was born with the starting point of half a Sequence… Klein asked again curiously,

"What Sequence pathway suits him?"

"The Sequence 9 that suits him is called 'Monster.' His nickname came from there. It's a pity that only the Life School of Thought has control over the Sequence pathway's beginning," Old Neil replied softly.

He tried to keep the conversation between him and Klein from the people around them to avoid leaking information to mysticism enthusiasts.

Life School of Thought? Klein recalled the information he had previously read.

The secret organization appeared in the beginning of the current epoch. Its actual origins were unknown, but it was mainly passed down via master and disciple.

Their theories and beliefs were hardly known. Klein only knew that they separated the world into three layers: the definite rational world, also known as the absolute truth world, the spirits' world, and the material world.

Rumor had it that the secret organization had once produced a Soothsayer… Wasn't that a Sequence pathway that corresponded to Seer? Confusing, really confusing… Klein shook his head and saw Ademisaul struggle to get up and then wander off to another corner.

He reorganized his thoughts and followed behind Old Neil. They walked past one stall after another. There were plants like moon flower, fingered citron, night vanilla, and mineral resources like silver, topaz, ruby and so on.

"It's really very well equipped…" Klein muttered softly.

The mysticism enthusiasts of all ages and genders around him would be stopping, distinguishing, or talking at times. It gave the area a bustling vibe.

"Walk around on your own. I am going to settle my bill." Old Neil pointed at one of the two rooms at the end.

"Alright." Klein nodded without thought.

He strolled with his black cane and came before a stall which sold self-made amulets. He took a careful look at it for a while.

Just when Klein prepared to speak with the seller, he suddenly heard someone asking the stall behind him, "Is this powder ground from cow teeth paeonol?"

Cow teeth paeonol? Isn't that one of the supplementary ingredients of the Spectator potion? Klein thought, then turned around to look at the inquirer.

Justice had repeated the formula for the potion several times, so Klein had been left with a remarkably clear impression of the ingredients.

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CHAPTER 69
PROTECTION AMULET

Klein looked over and saw the person inquiring about the cow teeth paeonol.

The man was less than a meter away from him. He was wearing a black suit and a halved top hat of the same color. He had a cane adorned with silver in his hand and a pair of gold-framed spectacles on his face. He had a refined bearing.

"Yes, do you need it? This can here costs three soli." The owner of the stall was wearing a long black robe, one filled mysticism traits.

The inquirer whose sideburns were pale yellow thought for a moment before saying, "Can it be cheaper? I still need to buy other ingredients too. For example, this bottle of white-edged sunflower petals."

The stall owner considered for a few seconds before grudgingly replying, "Two soli and six pence. I don't think you can find a price cheaper than that."

Klein immediately felt that he was overthinking things after seeing how the bespectacled man was buying ingredients other than the cow teeth paeonol.

However, he still tapped his glabella twice as an act of caution. He swept the man with his Spirit Vision.

No problems. He looks very healthy. His emotions are alright too. Mister, you need to keep this up… Klein retracted his gaze, turned around, and looked at the stall selling homemade amulets once again.

The amulets were placed neatly before him. Some of them were made of pure silver, some with steel, others forged from gold.

But only a few of the amulets had a weak aura emanating from them, some crimson, some pale white, some golden.

This meant that some of them had weak traces of spirituality and were definitely effective to a certain extent!

Klein looked at the amulets carefully and confirmed that the stall owner making the amulets had some foundation in mysticism.

The stall owner did not make any mistakes matching the different energy sources to the different incantations. He was also extremely accurate at choosing the materials that corresponded to the different energy sources.

Of course, a mere mysticism enthusiast would definitely make some mistakes. Klein noticed that the stall owner did not fully understand the incantations. One could not create an incantation simply by translating the content of the prayer into Hermes. The incantations had to follow a certain format that followed unique rules.

The other problem was that the stall owner had made mistakes of varying degrees when he was choosing a suitable symbol for the energy sources. That explained why there were only two or three amulets releasing the faint light out of the dozens that were laid before him.

As for how much of an effect the two to three amulets would have, Klein could only say that it was better than nothing.

An amulet that was truly equipped with obvious effects needed the craftsman to release his spirituality from a blade while carving the incantations and symbols!

If one wanted even better results, they would have to supplement it with ritualistic magic.

And these two things were not something an ordinary person could achieve.

Klein tapped his glabella twice, then pointed at the upper left corner of the stall with his black cane.

"How much for these two?"

He did not ask about the amulets that had a rudimentary colored aura, but half-completed items. Other than external shape, they had not been carved with incantations or symbols.

To Klein, there was no reason to purchase the amulets that had weak effects. What he wanted to do was to transform the half-completed amulets into true amulets.

Hmm, I'll make amulets that can protect a person from danger, one each for Benson and Melissa. As for my own, I can ask the Nighthawks to supply me with the ingredients… Man, I must have been influenced by Old Neil. I don't feel any guilt when doing something like that… Klein's mind wandered as he watched the stall owner pick up the half-completed silver amulets.

The first silver amulet was elongated and had a cavity in the middle. Around it were patterns of angel-like feathers. The craftsmanship was intricate and was very beautiful. The other was simple, almost completely devoid of any additional decorations or carvings. It had a vertical line representing the night, and a circle representing the crimson moon.

Klein, who paid much attention to appearances, took a liking to them immediately.

"This is six soli," the middle-aged stall owner said, pointing to the intricate amulet. He was a man of few words.

After pausing for a while, he rubbed the simpler piece and said, "This is five soli three pence."

"That's too expensive. They are still far from being an amulet." Klein had slowly been influenced by Benson and Melissa, so he had begun cultivating the habit of haggling.

After a battle of words, he bought the two silver accessories at five soli six pence and four soli nine pence respectively.

Yeah, they can only be considered silver accessories for the time being… Klein had that in mind.

The ten soli three pence was deducted from the reimbursement he received for his Divination Club membership.

Klein received the two silver accessories and placed them into his pocket. He was about to head to another stall when he heard a gentle voice.

"Sir, why are you not buying a completed amulet?"

Klein turned his head over and found a teenage girl asking him the question. She was about fifteen years of age and wore a lacy yellow dress while holding onto a veiled hat with a ribbon.

"It's because I intend to make my own amulets. As you know, that is the wish of every enthusiast of mysticism," Klein minced his words and answered.

He did not wish to make the stall owner think that he was trying to snatch his business, even though he had considered using his "skill" to earn a quick buck.

The teenage girl had naturally curly brown hair, and her face was adorable due to her baby fat. She looked at Klein with her light blue eyes and asked sincerely, "Can I seek your advice on choosing an amulet? Well, I was introduced here by a friend. I've been here several times and have a deep interest in mysticism. But I still do not know too much about it, and she, my friend, is going to turn sixteen soon. I wish to select an amulet as a gift to

her. I didn't bring her along as I want it to be a surprise… I had previously sought her advice, but I cannot remember a lot of the critical points."

Klein gave a gentlemanly smile.

"What kind of protection amulets are you looking for? Something to avert disasters? Something to avoid illnesses? Something that gives fortune? Different requirements would require different energy sources which means that they must point to different gods. Different gods would have different corresponding constellations, and the different constellations would mean that different materials have to be used.

"For example, the incantation for averting disasters would belong to the Empress of Disaster and Horror, who is the Evernight Goddess. As mysticism enthusiasts, we all know that the symbol of the Evernight Goddess is the moon. The corresponding metal would thus be pure silver.

"Therefore, if we hope to avert disasters, it is best that we choose an amulet that is made of pure silver and has the corresponding incantations."

We would also have to make sure that the incantations are of the correct language and format. The corresponding symbol of the Empress of Disaster and Horror means the Path Number, the spell's characteristic, and the relative positions of the symbols, etc, must also be correct… But this is too complicated, and there's no need for me to explain this for you… Klein added inwardly.

The girl's eyes sparkled. She asked with a little doubt, "Can a follower of the Goddess wear an amulet belonging to another god?"

"No problem. The gods do not mind such small matters," Klein consoled her.

It was not a problem for the person wearing the amulet, but the person creating the amulet had to be careful. If a believer of the Lord of Storms

were to craft an amulet of the Eternal Blazing Sun, they would most likely receive something malicious.

Of course, these referred to amulets requiring the aid of ritualistic magic. The craftsman need not pay much attention to this otherwise.

The teenage girl heaved a sigh of relief.

"I hope to get her an amulet for good health; which deity should I choose from? The Eternal Blazing Sun, Mother Earth, or the God of Knowledge and Wisdom?"

"There should be no problem with the Eternal Blazing Sun and Mother Earth. The former is represented by the sun while the latter is represented by the Brown Star." Klein smiled as he said, "The material of the sun is gold, while the metal that symbolizes the Brown Star is lead. I would suggest the sun, but I do not know if you brought enough money along with you."

The reason for his suggestion was because he had noticed that among the three amulets with a rudimentary spiritual glow, one of them was a health amulet that came under the domain of the sun.

"Isn't this…" Before the teenage girl finished her sentence, she stopped and warily looked at the stall owner who was waiting silently.

She thought for a moment before asking, "After I decide on the material, how should I distinguish the incantation and corresponding symbols?"

"Do you know Hermes?" Klein asked instead.

"I just started learning it," the teenage girl replied, a little embarrassed.

"Then let me choose it for you." Klein pointed at the health amulet made of gold and said, "This one has no problems, be it in the incantations or the representing symbol."

The teenage girl lifted the edges of her dress and squatted in front of the amulet. She picked up the health amulet with designs of the sun's rays around its edges. She felt as though the amulet was nourishing her, making her feel completely relaxed.

"Thank you, thank you." She stood up and curtsied in gratitude.

Klein laughed and said, "I'll leave the rest to you and the stall owner. I have other things to tend to."

He looked at the stall owner as he spoke and noticed that the man had a weird look in his eyes, as if deciding if he had to give a cut of the profit to Klein.

With a smile, Klein did not bother with the matter anymore. He continued touring the underground market, but he didn't notice any true Beyonder ingredients.

At this point, Old Neil had already paid off his debt. He was holding a dark colored wooden box in his hands.

He pointed to the other room behind and said after he noticed Klein's look of doubt, "Go there if you wish to buy or sell Beyonder ingredients. After all, no one wishes to let others know what extraordinary items they are purchasing."

"I understand." Klein nodded as though in thought.

There was no need for him to go there for the time being. He headed toward the exit of the underground market together with Old Neil.

"How much for these elf flowers?"

A query suddenly entered Klein's ears.

Elf flowers… That's also an ingredient for the Spectator potion… Klein thought as he glanced sideways. He once again saw the refined bespectacled man.

"What's the matter?" Old Neil asked curiously.

"Nothing much." Klein retracted his gaze.

Although he was a quasi-member of the Nighthawks, he did not feel that all Beyonders had to be absorbed by the Churches or locked up. He believed that it had to depend on the situation. Spectators definitely posed little danger to society or the kingdom, and the chances of losing control as a Sequence 9 were very slim.

…

After leaving Evil Dragon Bar, Klein and Old Neil took a public carriage and left the harbor. They then split ways at the North Borough and headed back to their respective homes.

The public transport steered into Daffodil Street and stopped by the side of the road. Klein was about to get off the carriage when he suddenly saw a young lady wearing a grayish-white dress about to board the carriage.

This lady had smooth black hair, her face a little round. She had thin eyes and unassuming features. But paired together, she gave off the feeling that she was sweet and gentle.

Klein noticed her not because of her beauty, but because he discovered that her body was shuddering slightly. It was an unnatural shudder.

"Miss, are you alright?" Klein asked in concern.

The young lady shook her head abruptly.

"No, I-I am just too tired."

The people behind Klein were urging for him to get off, so Klein could only leave the carriage.

When he found his footing, he paid attention to the situation from before again. He pinched his glabella twice, planning to determine if the lady was indeed alright.

He had the intention of sending her to the hospital if she had a serious illness that was going to act up soon.

Activating his Spirit Vision, the colors of the auras started to surface. Klein turned around and prepared to look at the sweet and gentle young lady.

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CHAPTER 70
2-049'S ARRIVAL

Clip-clop, clip-clop.

The horses widened their paces as the wheels began rolling in tow. Despite activating his Spirit Vision and turning around, hoping to observe the refined and sweet lady, Klein did not have his wishes fulfilled. All his eyes reflected were brown figures moving past him.

Meanwhile, the passengers from the stop had already boarded the carriage. The carriage door was closed tightly as it gradually departed.

Within the carriage, twenty to thirty people stood closely to each other, their energy fields overlapping and shielding each other. Hence, it was an explosion of colors in Klein's vision, making it difficult for him to differentiate.

He shook his head quietly and raised his finger to tap his glabella to deactivate his Spirit Vision.

To him, it was simply help he could provide if he happened to chance upon it. However, if he were to miss it, and the situation was not especially clear, there was no point taking it to heart and delaying his own matters.

While bathing in the crimson moonlight, Klein strolled back home on the still bustling Daffodil Street. He returned to see Melissa sitting beside the dining table. She was busy doing her homework under a bright gas lamp.

She bit at the fountain pen and frowned, appearing deep in thought.

"Where's Benson?" Klein asked casually.

"Ah…” Melissa looked up. She blanked out for a few seconds before saying, "He said he went around a few boroughs today and was covered in sweat. He's taking a nice relaxing bath."

"Alright." Klein chuckled. Suddenly, he realized that she was wearing a dress he had never seen before.

It was entirely beige in color. It had fashionable engageantes. The collar and edges of her top had thin frills. Apart from that, it was a rather simple design, the type one wore as daily casual clothing. It fully accentuated the youth of a sixteen or seventeen-year-old.

"New dress?" Klein asked with a smile.

It was a purchase that he and Benson had insisted upon.

Melissa answered in the affirmative tersely.

"I just took it back from Mrs. Rochelle. I was thinking that since I had to wash it later, I might as well try it on first."

Klein was rather puzzled when he heard that.

"Mrs. Rochelle?"

Wasn't she our former neighbor?

Melissa nodded and explained in all seriousness, "Mrs. Rochelle is actually a seamstress, but she was quite unlucky. She had no choice but to sew and mend clothes for others at home. She leads a pretty tough life. I knew that she had pretty good skill and the price she quoted is cheaper than at a women's clothing store. Furthermore, it's very well-tailored to my figure, so I ordered a new skirt from her. It only cost nine soli and five pence and took

only a few days. A dress of a similar style would cost three halves of a pound at Harrods Department Store!"

What a frugal girl… Sis, I know that at least half the reason is due to your pity of Mrs. Rochelle… Klein did not reproach Melissa for deciding things for herself. Instead, he said with a smile, "When did you go to Harrods?"

That was at Howes Street, near the Divination Club. It was somewhere where the middle-class shopped.

"…" Melissa was momentarily at a loss for words. It took her a long while before she said, "It was Selena and Elizabeth. They insisted I accompany them. Actually, well—I actually prefer gears more. I like places with steam and machinery. Yeah."

"It's quite, well—nice for a girl to occasionally shop at a department store." Klein laughed as he comforted his sister.

After some idle talk, he briskly walked to the second floor, hoping to wash away the repulsive mixed smells from the bar.

Just as he was about to return to his bedroom to get a change of clothes, he suddenly heard sounds coming from the bathroom close to the balcony.

A few seconds later, Benson stepped out while drying his gradually receding hairline.

"How was it? Did you compliment Melissa's new dress?" He shot a glance at Klein and asked with a smile.

"I guess I forgot. All I did was ask where it was done…" Klein thought for a moment as he said.

Benson immediately chortled and shook his head.

"How unbecoming of an elder brother. When Melissa received the dress, she couldn't bear putting it down. After rushing to cook and wash the dishes, she immediately wore the dress and has refused to take it off ever since."

…Wasn't she planning on changing after showering? She can wash and starch the clothes while doing so… Klein subconsciously refuted with the explanation that Melissa had given.

"Tsk." Benson sighed. "It's been scorching the past few days. She was busy in the kitchen for a long time, so I believe she would feel much better doing her homework after a shower."

That's right… Klein was suddenly enlightened as he gave his brother a knowing smile.

So that's what kind of person you are, Melissa… There's nothing wrong with a girl caring for her appearance. There's no need to find excuses… The corners of his mouth curved up as he shook his head gently before walking into his bedroom.

While he was showering, Klein faintly heard knocking downstairs. He immediately wondered.

Doesn't the worker who's in charge of collecting coins for the gas meter come only once every two weeks?

Could it be Mrs. Shaud from next door? That can't be. It's said that this lady strictly abides by the etiquette of middle-class society. She would not visit at an inappropriate time.

In his puzzlement, Klein wiped dry his body. Wearing old but comfortable shirt and trousers, he came down the stairs.

He surveyed the area but did not notice any strangers. He asked, "Was someone at the door just now?"

Benson, who was reading the newspapers casually, said with a smile, "It was Bitsch Mountbatten, one of the policemen in charge of Iron Cross Street. He asked if we met an eighteen or nineteen-year-old boy who has a rotund face. Heh, he even gave us a sketch to identify. Unfortunately, neither one of us have seen him, or we would have received a reward. What about you?"

"Nope." Klein had a general idea what was happening.

Instigator Tris had successfully escaped the Evil Dragon Bar at the harbor. He had escaped somewhere close to Iron Cross Street and Daffodil Street; therefore, the police were making visits from door to door.

And to go this far made it clear that the operation of nabbing the Instigator had completely failed!

Klein did not bother himself with the situation. He had yet to begin combat training. He only had basic mastery of shooting, so to consider dealing with a natural 'Assassin' was simply using his life as a joke.

He did not sleep well that night. He kept worrying that the Instigator would infiltrate their house to hide, causing another massacre.

Thankfully, Daffodil Street was quiet the entire night, with the morning sun rays dispersing all the fog.

The relaxed Klein changed into formal attire, wore his top hat, held his cane, and went all the way to Zouteland Street. He greeted Rozanne at the reception hall.

"Good morning, Klein," replied Rozanne happily. She suppressed her voice and said, "I heard the huge operation last night failed?"

"The operation to nab Instigator Tris?" Klein asked in curiosity.

"Yeah!" Rozanne nodded heavily. She shot a glance at the partition and said, "Apparently an informant of the Mandated Punishers discovered the Instigator at the harbor… They were planning on waiting for additional Beyonders and another Special Operations squad from the police to arrive before beginning the operation to do the deed instantly without alarming the commoners. Unfortunately, that Instigator was extremely sharp. He charged out of the encirclement when he noticed something amiss, successfully escaping as a result."

"At such times, they need a Beyonder with tracking abilities, such as me." Klein made a joke.

"There was no lack of trackers back then." Dunn Smith's voice suddenly sounded.

Rozanne turned her head abruptly and saw the captain wearing his black windbreaker. He was glaring right at her with his deep pair of gray eyes while leaning against the partition's frame.

She hurriedly raised her hands to cover her mouth. Then, she shook her head incessantly, expressing her futile innocence.

Dunn turned his gaze to Klein and after some thought, he said, "There were a total of six Beyonders from the Mandated Punishers, the Machinery Hivemind, and us Nighthawks. We traced the injured Tris to Iron Cross Street's Lower Street. We found his temporary residence, but the clues ended there. Be it Beyonder methods or ordinary investigations, nothing worked. It was as though he evaporated into thin air, disappearing completely."

"Do you need my help with divination?" Klein asked probingly.

Dunn shook his head gently.

"The Machinery Hivemind had a Mystery Pryer. He is a senior Beyonder as good as Old Neil. I even suspect that he's already at Sequence 8. I'm just

unaware what the name of the corresponding potion is."

"The Theosophy Order's heritage to this day must have something special about it," consoled Klein.

For the rest of the morning, he continued his mysticism curriculum, read the historical information and documents, and practiced various techniques just like always.

With lunchtime almost approaching, Klein's mind began to wander.

Another few minutes later, he put away the documents, having heard the summoning of his stomach.

At that moment, Dunn Smith came into the clerk office. He said in a deep but mild manner, "Klein, follow me to Chanis Gate. Sealed Artifact 2-049 has arrived. The subsequent operation might require your sensing of that notebook."

“…Alright," Klein got up and replied.

His thoughts became scrambled. He imagined how the Sealed Artifact would look or if the operation would be dangerous.

While in this rather tense silence, he followed Dunn down the stairs and into the tunnel.

After going straight at the intersection, Dunn suddenly stopped and turned his head, saying sternly, "Do this action together with me. Keep doing it and absolutely do not stop. Remember, absolutely do not stop. This is for your own safety!"

While speaking, Dunn bent his arm followed by extending it. He repeated this action without stopping.

Klein looked at the captain demonstrate in a befuddled manner. Suddenly enlightened, he asked, "Has this got to do with the uniqueness of the Sealed Artifact?"

"Yes." Dunn nodded with abnormal seriousness. "Repeating such an action will allow us to discover if anything happens to you immediately. Saving you in time will not result in any life-threatening dangers."

"Okay." Klein did not hesitate further as he began the repeated action of bending and extending his arm.

"If your arm is sore, use the other one," added Dunn.

Sealed Artifact "2-049" sure is odd… What meaning does this action have? It seems very dangerous… These thoughts flashed past Klein's mind as he looked solemnly at the captain.

"Alright."

He had too many questions on his mind, but since Chanis Gate was in sight, he had no choice but to bear with it.

Besides, with my security clearance, I'll probably not learn of the details. I can only do as I'm ordered… Klein exhaled as he followed Captain Dunn to the Keeper room outside Chanis Gate.

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CHAPTER 71
SLUGGISH PHENOMENON

Klein repeatedly bent and extended his arm as he watched Dunn push open the Keeper's room with his body sideways.

The captain's carefulness and high alertness, as well as the ridiculous and laughable "protective actions," left him feeling abnormally tensed. The feeling was identical to what he felt when taking tests of courage that required him to walk through spooky cemeteries at night in his youth.

A Grade 2 Sealed Artifact. Dangerous. To be used with care and moderation… It is something even a formal Nighthawk member does not know the details to… It is unknown how dangerous it is… Amid his tense nerves, Klein found it impossible to curb himself from overthinking.

At that moment, his brain suddenly turned numb as though a power switch had been flicked off.

Everything in Klein's vision turned slow. Even his arm actions shared the same fate.

He saw Captain Dunn stop in his tracks. He came close to him as though in slow motion, extending his palm out slowly before pushing him in the shoulder.

Suddenly, Klein's thought processes and vision were restored to normal at the same time. It was as though everything from before was just an illusion.

"What happened?" he whispered amid his fright and confusion.

Dunn shook his head and said in a deep voice, "Observe carefully."

The moment he finished his sentence, he turned around and walked into the Keeper's room. Klein followed closely behind and saw four other people in the room; they were either seated or standing.

One of them was the Midnight Poet, Leonard. The other three were people Klein had never met before. However, all of them shared a common trait. They were all doing the extending and bending arm "exercise" with utmost seriousness.

"Klein Moretti has a miraculous connection with the Antigonus family's notebook." Dunn gave a brief introduction.

Then, he pointed to the other three strangers and said, "These lady and gentlemen are colleagues from the Backlund diocese. They escorted Sealed Artifact 2-049 here. This is Madam Lorotta, Sequence 8 Gravedigger. She is a master sharpshooter."

At that moment, the black-haired woman who looked about thirty nodded at Klein in a friendly manner.

She looked pretty good. She did not wear a hat and was dressed in what appeared like male attire—a black coat with a white shirt, tight black trousers and black leather boots. The corners of her mouth were slightly curved up.

After Klein exchanged greetings, Dunn pointed to a man seated behind the desk.

"Aiur Harson, someone just like me."

Before he finished his sentence, Klein saw Mr. Aiur Harson in his gray windbreaker turn sluggish with his arm motion. It was as though a gear had lost its lubricant or a joint covered in rust.

What's wrong… Amid Klein's daze, he saw Lorotta push Aiur Harson. Only then did the gentleman's actions return to normal.

Was I like that previously? Klein was first taken aback before he came to the realization.

This indicated the dangers that Sealed Artifact 02-49 held!

What would happen if one was not awoken in time?

Would one become a zombie?

Filled with questions, Klein greeted the charming middle-aged Aiur Harson.

"Borgia," Dunn said as he pointed to the last Nighthawk.

Borgia was a cold man with a knife scar on the side of his face. His sharp brown eyes were like an eagle's. He was constantly observing everyone in the room.

"Let's set off. The faster we end this, the faster we can seal 2-049," the handsome Aiur Harson said as he stood, his eyes revealing some wrinkles.

So, where is 2-049? Klein surveyed his surroundings curiously but did not notice any traces of the Sealed Artifact. Of course, he could not see the areas obscured by the table without activating his Spirit Vision.

"Alright," Dunn turned and looked at Leonard Mitchell. "You'll be in charge of driving. It is best not to involve Cesare with matters like this."

Cesare was the clerk in charge of procuring and collecting supplies for the Tingen Nighthawks while standing in as a carriage driver. He was the one who drove Klein to Welch's home to meet the Spirit Medium Daly.

"No problem." Leonard stopped acting frivolous and nodded seriously.

At that moment, Klein saw Aiur Harson bending over. He picked up a black metal chest which had been obscured by the table.

The chest was carved with resplendent stars and the crimson full moon. It was as though there was a formless barrier around the chest.

The Sealed Artifact should be inside there? I wonder what 2-049 looks like… Klein observed the chest curiously.

Thump!

Thump! Thump!

Violent knocking sounds suddenly erupted from the black chest. Even the surface of the chest bulged time and time again.

Thump! Thump! Thump!

It was as though something horrifying had awakened within the chest and was pounding wildly. The sound of the knocking was beaten into the hearts of everyone present.

It's alive? Just as Klein had a thought, he saw Captain Dunn's arm exercises turning sluggish, as if his joints were layered with glue.

Borgia, the Nighthawk from Backlund, pushed Dunn's shoulder, allowing him to recover.

It's like doing the robot dance when one is affected by 2-049… If all of us are under its influence, wouldn't we be some awkward dance squad… Luckily, 2-049 seems capable of only influencing one person at a time… Klein lampooned to relax his tense nerves. He did not dare halt his arm exercises.

He followed Dunn's lead and left his cane behind. He then followed behind the five Nighthawks through the tunnel and up the stairs to the second floor

of the Blackthorn Security Company.

Leonard had gone ahead and notified everyone in the front of the buildings, so Rozanne and the rest had all made their way to the third level. These incidents rarely involved them, but they were not completely alien to them. Another Nighthawk, Kenley, had replaced Dunn in his watch over Chanis Gate.

Klein heaved a sigh of relief when he reached the carriage. He looked suspiciously out the window and said, "Won't 2-049 affect the ordinary people on the streets?"

From their journey underground to the carriage, Sealed Artifact 2-049 had already caused six sluggish incidents, two of which were targeted at him. He had been jolted awake by Captain Dunn and Leonard Mitchell respectively. The rate of the sluggish effect was rather alarming!

"No worries, 2-049 will target humanoid creatures within five meters of it first. The closer you are to it, the easier it is for you to be chosen. As long as there are three people surrounding it, people who happen to be around when the carriage steers past will not be affected," the beautiful, black-haired lady Lorotta explained with a lazy tone.

What a weird Sealed Artifact… Klein thought as he continued his arm exercises.

Dunn and the rest of the Nighthawks did not speak on the journey to Ray Bieber's house. They were paying close attention to each other's condition. Only Lorotta wore a nonchalant look. At times, she took in the sights of Tingen's not-so-clean streets, and at other times, she praised Backlund's underground water system.

Soon after, the familiar building finally entered Klein's line of sight. The group of six made their way to the third level while observing each other.

The door to Ray Bieber's house was labeled with the Tingen Police Department's symbol, indicating that entry was forbidden to unauthorized personnel.

As Dunn did his stretching exercises, he took out a key. He opened the newly changed lock, then turned around, allowing Aiur Harson who was carrying the black chest to enter first.

Thump!

Thump! Thump! Thump!

The Sealed Artifact in the black chest knocked violently once again, even more violent than before. This made Aiur Harson's arm waver from side to side uncontrollably. It even made Klein suspect that the chest would be pounded open in time.

Thump! Thump! Thump!

Klein quickly noticed that Captain Dunn's movements were becoming sluggish. He was about to wake him up when a buzz sounded in his brain. His brain became numb, the scenes before his eyes played as though they were in slow motion.

Didn't they say that… that it only affects one… person at a time… Klein's thoughts quickly became sluggish.

At this moment, the prepared Lorotta and Borgia woke each of them up respectively by pushing them.

Having his thought processes and vision restored, Klein looked around with lingering fear. He nearly blurted out.

"Didn't you say that 2-049 can only affect one person at a time?"

Thankfully, I did not stop my stretches!

"When Sealed Artifact 2-049 enters its berserk mode, it can affect up to two people at once. We can confirm that Ray Bieber is indeed a descendant of the Antigonus family," Aiur Harson said with a mechanical tone.

Lorota let out a faint laugh. She looked at Klein and said, "2-049 becomes very agitated when it meets a descendant of the Antigonus family, even if only their scent remains. Its abilities would also increase considerably. I believe you would be able to understand its feelings."

Well, I don't… Klein asked curiously, "So, is it a living creature?"

Lorotta smiled but did not reply him directly.

"You'll know in a while. As long as Ray Bieber hasn't escaped Tingen, 2-049 will lead us to him."

Klein could only put his other questions on hold as he walked around the room with the Nighthawks.

Amid the loud and violent thumping from the chest, they locked the door, walked down the stairs, and returned to the carriage.

Aiur Harson looked out the window several times and confirmed that there were no pedestrians within a five-meter radius of them. He then placed the black chest on the ground and twisted the mechanical switch to release its spiritual restraints.

The violent thumping stopped suddenly, slipping the entire carriage into silence. Not even the breaths of the Nighthawks could be heard.

Klein held his breath as the black chest opened slowly. A sharp creak that hurt his ears could be heard.

Creak!

The chest fell as a slender brown arm extended out of the chest. It was about the length of a child's finger.

Two arms pressed forward one after another as an object about the size a normal human being's palm appeared bit by bit in front of Klein and company.

It had clear elbow, finger, and knee joints. Covered in an oil-stained brown cloth, its face was painted with the colors of a clown—red and yellow.

It was a wooden puppet with a weird appearance!

2-049 lifted its head and looked at Klein with its pure black eyes.

Its rigid mouth slowly parted to reveal a clown-like smile.

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CHAPTER 72
TRACKING

The wooden puppet's face was painted in red and yellow like the common clown. The corners of its mouth were upturned high, revealing an abnormally comical smile.

Its lips parted to reveal a dark and deep mouth. Klein, who had locked his gaze with it, felt his hair stand as intense horror leaped out of his heart in an uncontrollable manner.

Everything before his eyes grew dull, as though he was looking at the world through a piece of thick brown glass.

Klein's thoughts slowed down gradually, and he instinctively wanted to ask for help, but his neck seemed to be held tight by a rope. He couldn't make a single sound, and the single word was trapped in silence.

Just then, Dunn noticed his arm exercises becoming sluggish and pushed him heavily.

The brown glass before Klein's eyes shattered in an instant. He blurted out the word "help" which had remained dormant in his throat. It reverberated within the carriage, with sharp panic.

"It's getting stronger," Klein spoke in a very certain tone.

Being next to a strange Sealed Artifact like 2-049 really placed on in terrifying peril if they were not careful. No, it was totally impossible to guard against it. It could only be avoided through other methods!

"It's normal," Aiur Harson said steadily, nodding.

Lorotta chuckled.

"It seems to like you? Don't worry. It is a relatively less dangerous Grade 2 Sealed Artifact."

In her naturally languid voice, the puppet whose joints clearly reflected a human's stood up. It began tottering towards its left.

Its action was incomprehensible, just like a steam engine that someone had rusted due to a lack of lubricating oil.

Robot dance… Klein suddenly had the few Chinese words pop into his head. He had a new guess of the danger 2-049 posed.

It assimilates the living things that it seizes control of?

If I am not woken up in time by the others, would I have become a human-sized puppet, a real-life Barbie doll?

Just as thoughts flooded Klein, Aiur Harson was awoken by Dunn. He extended and bent his arms as he pointed in the direction that the puppet was walking slowly towards. He said to Leonard who was driving the carriage, "Over there!"

Leonard couldn't make the carriage pass through the building, so he had to detour. During the detour, 2-049 constantly adjusted the direction that it was facing. It acted like a compass that pointed towards the Antigonus family.

Upon seeing the scene, Klein, who was constantly "exercising" his arms, nearly burst out laughing under the tension.

I heard that 2-049 was created by the Antigonus family… Is this an act of loyalty or the perfect example of screwing things up?

Leonard drove the carriage according to Aiur Harson's occasional instructions.

Whenever the strange puppet 2-049 walked to the edge of the carriage, Aiur Harson would pull it back and start it all over again.

Every time that happened, its mouth would open and two people would be under its influence simultaneously.

Klein's taut feelings gradually began to relax. He realized that Sealed Artifact 2-049 was not as scary anymore. As long as there were more than three people present and they constantly maintained their arm motions, if they made sure to wake their partners in time, 2-049 was merely a puppet with slightly unique characteristics.

The carriage traveled at high speed, and quickly arrived at the harbor, where warehouses were clustered.

After circling a few times, they confirmed that 2-049 intended to enter the innermost grayish-white warehouse. Aiur Harson's expression turned solemn. He grabbed the puppet carefully and stuffed it back into the black chest.

Thump! Thump! Thump!

Under constant ferocious knocking, Aiur woke up again and again with the help of Borgia and Lorotta as he activated the mechanism with great effort. He then injected his spirituality and activated the star and crimson symbols on the chest.

At the reappearance of the formless seal, Aiur Harson let out a long heavy breath.

"Let's get down," Dunn Smith said with a low and mild voice. "Leonard, tying the horse here will do."

Dressed in windbreakers, suits, or shirts, the six left the carriage and walked into the innermost warehouse. As they walked, they uniformly stretched and bent their arms.

This added a comical and ridiculous vibe to the rather tense situation.

The Nighthawk Awkward Dance Squad… Klein could only complain inwardly to ease such a feeling.

However, there was no other way around it. According to his observations, 2-049 first affected the upper body. Therefore, to detect it in time to prevent a more dangerous situation from developing, they only had the choice of extending and bending their arms, shake their necks or bodies. However, the latter only made one look like a hooligan.

As for actions like blinking eyes and striking one's eyebrows, they were either too easily ignored or the action was too big. Neither was a good option.

This awkward dance squad is better than Causeway Bay [1] triad members… Klein sighed in resignation and followed Captain Dunn Smith and company.

As they approached the warehouse's door, the deeper his anxiety and worry became.

No one knew what kind of effect the notebook had on Ray Bieber!

If something dire happened, Klein did not dare pin his hopes on transmigrating again.

Furthermore, he discovered that he could still be injured and bleed while chopping ingredients for dinner. The speed at which he recovered at was normal too. He wasn't some kind of monster that was impervious to combat or death.

As they walked, Dunn suddenly lowered his non-moving hand and made a pressing gesture to beckon everyone to stop ten meters away from the warehouse's door.

"Klein, divine if there is any danger in the warehouse. It'd be better if you could tell the level of danger," Dunn said as he turned his head to Klein.

His gray eyes looked deep as usual; there was no fear.

Klein gave an unnoticeable nod and stopped the hand exercise. He extended his right hand to his left cuff and removed the silver chain that had a hanging piece of topaz.

As he was still moving his arms, Dunn realized his sluggish actions in time and woke him up with a nudge.

Klein held the silver chain with his left hand and allowed the topaz to hang down naturally. Simultaneously, he moved his right arm, but with a much smaller range of motion.

When the topaz stabilized, he half closed his eyes, outlined the spherical light, and entered Cogitation. He then mumbled, "There's danger in the warehouse."

"There's danger in the warehouse."

…

After seven times, he opened his eyes and saw the hanging topaz slowly going in clockwise circles.

It turned faster and faster, and in the end, Klein felt like it was pulling his left hand.

"There's danger, great danger," Klein replied honestly.

Clockwise meant affirmation to the chanted statement, while counter-clockwise meant denial.

To other Beyonders, even a Mystery Pryer, using spirit dowsing could only determine if there was danger, but it was unable to obtain information regarding the level of danger.

However, Klein discovered that when he used spirit dowsing, the pendulum would spin at different speeds, revealing the degree of the answer.

Although it was not very accurate and extremely vague, it allowed one to have a rough assessment of the actual situation.

As expected of a Seer potion… Klein was rather happy with the outcome.

Just as he was about to put away the topaz pendulum, Leonard Mitchell, who had maintained his silence, suddenly spoke.

"Divine if there is danger around us also."

Dunn nodded in agreement. "Yes, I am worried that the Secret Order will not give up and that it has placed Ray Bieber's house under constant surveillance. They could have followed us here and could cause trouble at a critical moment."

Klein took a deep breath and entered a calm, ethereal state once again.

When the silver chain turned stable once again, he recited in his heart, "There is danger surrounding us."

…

"There is danger surrounding us."

…

After repeating the statement, Klein opened his eyes and looked at the silver chain.

In his dark brown eyes, the topaz pendulum first moved counterclockwise with difficulty. Then, it suddenly paused and started moving clockwise.

"There is danger surrounding us." Klein felt a tug on his heartstrings as he spoke carefully.

Furthermore, someone had tried to intercept his divination, but had lost to him in the invisible fight!

Just as he spoke, an orange-yellow fireball the size of a fist flew towards them.

It came crashing towards the middle of the group with its blazing speed.

Dunn Smith, who had already drawn his long-barreled revolver before Klein did his divination, immediately raised his hand, aimed, and pulled the trigger.

Bang!

The fireball didn't seem to be affected by the gunshot but continued its original trajectory, as though it was forcing everyone to scatter from dodging.

Klein originally thought nothing of the troublemaker who was following them. After all, there were six Beyonders present. They were not even short of Sequence 8 and Sequence 7 experts. It was a lineup that was practically unstoppable in a small city like Tingen.

But when the fireball smashed down, he came to a sudden realization.

To them, the most dangerous enemy was not the tracker nor the troublemaker, it wasn't even Ray Bieber who was in the warehouse in an

unknown state, but the Sealed Artifact 2-049!

Once they dispersed and the battle began, they wouldn't be able to wake each other in time. Then, they would turn into real-life puppets one after another!

As these chaotic thoughts bombarded him, Klein was pulled by Leonard aside to dodge the fireball.

Without the time to feel anguish for his clothing, he saw the Nighthawks split off into two groups while dodging. It was done very orderly.

Poof!

The orange-yellow fireball landed on the ground but didn't stir one bit of dust. It disappeared as though nothing had happened.

An illusion? Just as this thought came to him, Klein saw Aiur Harson lift the black chest and threw it least ten meters away.

"Stay away from it! Watch it!" Aiur shouted.

Before he finished his shout, Leonard and Borgia had separately approached it. They stood at least seven meters from the chest to prevent anyone from approaching.

As for Dunn and Lorotta, they each held guns. They stood beside Aiur Harson who had drawn a thin silver sword. They took up a formation resembling a crescent as they rushed towards the origins of the fireball, while taking note of the peripheral regions.

Upon seeing this scene, Klein, who needed to do the arm exercises without his cane, immediately heaved a sigh of relief. He realized he had overlooked an important matter.

2-049 had a limited range of influence. As long as they were at a sufficient distance from it, they did not need to worry about the danger.

Klein rolled over and stood up. He stuffed his topaz pendulum into his pocket with one hand while he reached into his holster for his revolver with the other.

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CHAPTER 73
FIRST BATTLE

Under the illumination of the afternoon sun, Klein in his dust-coated clothes quickly twisted his revolver's barrel to remove his self-imposed safety. He went into a shooting stance, allowing the light to reflect from the brass body of the revolver.

He held the revolver with one hand, and moved his other arm, cautiously paying attention to anything that could happen around him.

At the same time, he was a little worried for Captain Dunn and Mr. Aiur Harson. After all, both were Nightmare Beyonders who specialized in influencing the enemy from the shadows. He did not know if they were adept at direct combat.

Just as Klein was having these considerations, Aiur Harson slowed down, his expression becoming serene and peaceful.

He opened his mouth and recited a peaceful poem, one that seemed to place a person into the night.

"When once the sun sinks in the west,

"And dewdrops pearl the evening's breast;

"Almost as pale as moonbeams are,

"Or its companionable star,

"The evening primrose opens anew

"Its delicate blossoms to the dew;

"And, hermit-like, shunning the light [1] "

…

The recital reverberated around them. Klein nearly lost his tense feelings and completely relaxed.

He was lucky that he had experienced something similar before and was not facing Aiur Harson. Thus, he quickly collected himself and entered a half-cogitative state to combat the influence of the poem.

Phew… He let out a sigh of relief. He no longer had any doubts about Dunn's and Aiur's direct combat abilities.

As he had only advanced recently and still did not have a deep understanding of Sequence potions, Klein had forgotten that the Sequence 7 Nightmare was the advancement of Sequence 8 Midnight Poet. They could keep whatever abilities they had before and, in fact, enjoy a small increase in their abilities.

The impression Klein had of Midnight Poets all came from Leonard Mitchell. He knew that this "job" inherited the unique traits of a Sleepless. They were good at combat, shooting, climbing, and sensing. They were also adept in influencing the living creatures around them through the use of various poems. In simpler terms, they were violent poets.

While Aiur was reciting his poem, the large wooden crates stacked up around them seemed to suddenly ripple like water. A man wearing a black tuxedo and halved top hat appeared.

But this man's face was painted in three pastel colors—red, yellow, and white. The sides of his lips were arched high like a clown, forming a

ridiculous contrast with his formal wear that was suitable for joining an evening banquet.

Thud! Thud! Thud! The black-haired Lorotta who had been introduced as a sharpshooter charged forward quickly. She had a gun in one hand and had clenched the other into a fist. She made it within inches of the suited clown in a few steps.

The suited clown seemed to be affected by Aiur Harson's poem. His body was swaying, and he had a peaceful expression in his eyes. He did not have any desire to retaliate.

Lorotta tilted her body with a boxing maneuver as she pulled back her fist, then punched toward the suited clown's face.

Bang!

The air crackled as the suited clown shattered suddenly like a mirror, pieces quickly evaporating and vanishing into thin air.

At this moment, the suited clown quickly appeared once again in the shadows of the wooden crates a few steps away. The suited clown's figure outline quickly appeared again.

The person under the influence of the poem was only an illusion! It was a performance!

The suited clown grinned again. It had a comical look as he pressed down on his halved top hat with one hand and pointed a finger gun with the other.

Bang!

The sound of a shot rang from the finger gun. Lorotta fell to the left and rolled on the floor, dodging the attack.

But nothing had happened, except for the fake gunshot.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Dunn and Aiur each lifted their guns and fired steadily. The suited clown dodged adeptly, sometimes to the right and left, sometimes rolling on the ground. It was as if he was an acrobat act in a circus.

Suddenly, Lorotta surprisingly charged forward again. Despite being called a sharpshooter, she was still using her fists.

Bam!

The suited clown could not dodge the attack in time and could only lift his left arm to block the fist.

Seeing the clown stop, Dunn and Aiur did not hesitate to each take aim and pulled the trigger.

At this moment, the arm that the suited clown used to block Lorotta's fist ignited with an orange-yellow flame.

In an instant, the flame enveloped the suited clown and spread towards Lorotta.

Bang! Bang! Dunn and Aiur fired their revolvers, hitting the ball of flame.

The flames burned rapidly and soon, all that was left were black ashes floating in the sky. But the suited clown once again appeared behind the stack of wooden crates close by.

He lifted his right hand and pointed a finger gun once again.

Bang!

Amid the illusory gunshot, Lorotta suddenly stopped in her tracks. She did not charge forward. Mud was splattering in front of her as a bullet appeared.

The suited clown was no longer delivering an illusion with this strike!

It was hard to discern real from fake, reality from illusion.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

The suited clown shot at Dunn and Aiur repeatedly while hiding away and appearing at random times.

Upon seeing this, Lorotta squinted and lifted the dull gold revolver in her left hand.

Bang!

The suited clown suddenly squatted down, avoiding the fatal shot. His halved top hat was sent flying backward, falling to the ground. The bullet had left a visible scorch mark on the hat.

After rolling a few times on the floor, the suited clown scaled the stacks of wooden crates with the agility of a monkey. He shot air bullets out of his finger gun from the high ground.

Aiur Hanson took a few steps back and lowered his gun. He began his recital once again.

"Wastes its fair bloom upon the night,

"Who, blindfold to its fond caresses,

"Knows not the beauty it possesses."

…

The suited clown jumped repeatedly between the crates. He suddenly raised his hand to scratch his ears and looked at Aiur with a comical smile.

Could he have stuffed his ears? The Sequence potion that the Secret Order possesses sure is weird… Klein observed the fight from far away as he made silent guesses.

Just as his thoughts flashed through him, he suddenly saw a figure appear at the top of a warehouse beside him. Furthermore, it was running straight inside where Ray Bieber was hiding.

That figure was dressed in a grayish-white uniform, one which workers at the docks wore. His face also appeared to be painted red, yellow, and white.

The suited clown is responsible for distracting Captain and the rest while the other person retrieved the diary? Klein instinctively raised his right hand and shot at the figure on the roof.

He had just taken aim when the figure suddenly squatted, switching from running to rolling on the ground.

Bang!

Klein did not stop pulling the trigger. He saw the figure suddenly pause, blood blooming in a spurt.

The figure looked at him in shock. While bearing the pain, he continued charging into the warehouse.

That felt like a lucky shot… Klein twitched his lips and pulled the trigger once again. This time, the bullet hit the wooden roof beside the figure.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Leonard and Borgia also shot but did not hit the figure.

Klein wanted to criticize how terrible their shooting skills were as compared to his when he suddenly stopped pulling the trigger.

That's right! Why must we stop him?

Didn't I divine that there is grave danger in the warehouse just now? Wouldn't it be great if we let that guy be the vanguard and step on the land mine for us?

Leonard and that Mr. Borgia must have had the same idea…

With this thought, Klein lifted the barrel of his revolver and shot at the sky.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

As the gunshots rang, the figure managed to reach the innermost region of the warehouse unobstructed.

He lunged downwards, slamming into the roof as he fell down with the collapsing roof.

Immediately following the commotion, the black-haired Lorotta's eyes suddenly turned black. Her left hand began making a strange pulling action.

The suited clown's jumping actions suddenly came to a pause as his ankle seemed to be grasped tightly by an invisible hand.

Dunn did not shoot immediately and instead pointed his revolver downward.

He opened his mouth and by simply using his spirituality to resonate the air around him, he produced a strange, faint and ethereal voice without the use of his throat.

"Thus it blooms on while night is by;

"When day looks out with open eye,

"Bashed at the gaze it cannot shun,

"It faints and withers and is gone."

…

The suited clown suddenly became limp, as if he had lost the desire to live.

Aiur Harson lifted his handgun and took aim, his finger pulling the trigger immediately.

In that split second, there was an abnormal and tragic wail that came from the warehouse.

"Ah!"

The cry contained immense fear as though he had encountered an unimaginably terrifying matter.

The hair on Klein's body stood on end. The tragic cries came to a sudden stop as silence was restored in the deepest parts of the warehouse. It was a skin-crawling silence.

Bang!

Affected by the cry, Aiur only managed to shoot the suited clown in the belly.

Haaa… Haaa… Haaa! The silence was once again broken from the deepest depths of the warehouse. What should have been soft panting sounded. It reached a crescendo that tightened everyone's nerves.

Thump! Thump! Thump! Thump! Thump! Thump!

Inside the black chest, 2-049 had reached a frenzied state.

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CHAPTER 74
RAY BIEBER

Haa! Haa! Haa!

Thump! Thump! Thump!

The loud panting and the intense knocking alternated first before they resounded together. It made Klein and company extremely nervous, as though they were hearing some evil murmur.

Taking advantage of the moment Aiur, Dunn and Lorotta had their attention redirected, the suited clown suddenly pulled out a long piece of paper from his pocket.

Pa! He threw it with his right hand as the slip of paper ignited into a black fiery whip. Then, he lashed it towards the side of his ankle.

A fleeting but tragic scream sounded as the suited clown escaped the invisible shackles and did a backflip.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Dunn, Aiur, and Lorotta shot but their bullets only ended up hitting the wooden crates.

The suited clown did not stay any longer as he pressed down on his wound with his right hand while escaping in a direction opposite the warehouse.

He was so fast that in the blink of an eye, all that was left was a hint of his back.

And before he vanished, his right hand which pressed down on his abdomen moved towards his left arm. The wound on his stomach had already vanished, looking completely fine.

The location on his left arm which he touched with his right hand suddenly became badly mangled, and a silver bullet appeared in the torn flesh.

Dunn and the rest didn't chase after him because the panting from the innermost warehouse was so loud that it was making them nervous and insecure.

Bang!

The door of the innermost warehouse suddenly exploded and flew in all directions.

Then, something wrapped with a torn cloth flew out and landed not far from Klein.

When Klein cast his gaze over, he realized that it was an arm. Its bloody flesh had been chewed on and its white bones were cracked in an irregular fashion as they jutted out

Pa! Pa! Pa!

One item after another flew out. First it was a spray of blood, followed by a dilated eye and an ear which had been ripped out brutally. Finally, half a beating heart and intestines filled with yellowish-brown objects came out.

If Klein had not seen the more gruesome giant cadaver at Ray Bieber's place, he would have probably vomited there and then.

His nerves were on the brink of a breakdown. After a great deal of effort to hold back his urge to shoot into the pitch-black entrance, he ejected the empty shells from his revolver and reloaded with new demon hunting bullets.

Bang!

Dunn drew close as he stably shot into the warehouse.

However, his bullet was like a shot into the sea. There was no audible response.

Haa! Haa! Haa!

The loud panting sped up as grayish-white colors filled the opened door.

With another two loud shots, Aiur Harson's and Borgia's bullets tore through the whiteness, but failed to prevent the "color" from spilling outwards. It did not leave any wounds or cause liquid to seep out.

Klein held his breath and kept himself from shooting blindly. He watched as the whiteness slowly revealed a complete outline.

It was a humanoid creature more than two meters tall. Its limb joints were all unnaturally twisted. It was as though they had been snapped by someone forcefully.

White bones poked out from under its skin as the entire grayish-white surface was filled with gullies, like a human brain that had been stripped from its shell.

The monster had grayish-white, rotting, sticky liquid flowing all over it. Its head looked relatively normal, with deep wrinkles and pale skin.

As it opened and closed its mouth, Klein could see a porcelain false tooth that looked close to falling out, a few strands of bloody saliva, and bone and flesh that had been minced.

*Was… Ray Bieber still even f**king human?* Klein drew a silent gasp as he felt his heart pound rapidly.

Bang!

Leonard's demon hunting bullet hit Ray Bieber's forehead and tore right through it, leaving behind a deep hole.

Grayish-white liquid flowed out and dripped onto the ground. The liquid wriggled and turned into fat cream-colored maggots.

But the monster appeared completely unaffected. It was neither fast nor slow when it pounced at Borgia who was closest to it. Its actual target appeared to be the black chest that contained Sealed Artifact 2-049.

"Loss of control of Beyonder powers…" Dunn shouted in a deep voice. "Lorotta, it looks like a dead soul, so quickly look for its weakness!"

"Alright." Lorotta did not speak further as she raised her hands to press down on her eyes.

Her pupils turned gray then colorless, as though she had entered the world of spirits and a kingdom of dead souls. She looked down at the enemy from a higher vantage point as she searched for a "node."

Klein saw that a normal gunshot was ineffective, so he did not bother wasting more of his bullets. He lifted his hand to tap at his glabella to activate his Spirit Vision. He planned on helping Gravedigger Lorotta.

From his vision, Monster Bieber only had one kind of spiritual glow left. It was purely grayish-white, a whiteness filled with craziness.

Apart from that, Klein saw nothing else.

At that moment, Aiur Harson and Leonard Mitchell sang simultaneously.

"Oh, the threat of horror, the hope of crimson cries!

"One thing at least is certain—that this Life flies;

"One thing is certain, and the rest is Lies;

"The Flower that once has bloomed forever dies…”

…

The power that allowed one to enter a peaceful slumber emanated. The twisted grayish-white monster gradually slowed down as though it could not fight against the charm of the poem.

Then, it opened its mouth and let out a shrill cry that ordinary people were deaf to.

"Ah!"

…

Bang! Klein felt a sharp pain in his head as he automatically exited his Spirit Vision state.

He felt warm liquid flowing out of his nose, and when he subconsciously wiped it with his hand, he discovered the back of his hand covered in blood.

Aiur and Leonard fell back to the ground at the same time. They had blood stains lining the corners of their lips, noses, and eyes.

Borgia, Dunn, and Lorotta each took a step or two back, the color in their face draining.

That monster only screamed once, but it appeared to exceed what the six Beyonders could withstand. They instantly turned extremely weak.

Bam!

It closed in on Borgia and suddenly swung its twisted joint.

Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang!

Borgia and Dunn shot twice each, but they didn't cause any damage to Monster Bieber.

Bang! A blow sent Borgia flying out as his long-barreled revolver fell to the ground.

He tried to stand up a few times, but failed to do so.

The corner of Monster Bieber's mouth had stringy liquid oozing out as it leaped towards the black chest.

Bang!

At that crucial moment, Aiur Harson shot a bullet at the box to knock it some distance away, preventing Monster Bieber from grabbing it. Its momentum brought it forward by more than ten meters.

The black chest cracked and as the thumping within turned more intense it grew more obvious.

"Found it!" The black-haired Lorotta finally spoke. "I need you to control it for at least three seconds."

"Alright." Dunn didn't delay any further. He extended his hand to tap his glabella and closed his eyes.

He seemed to fall asleep as shapeless waves slowly rippled out one after another.

In that instant, Monster Bieber paused and the craziness in its eyes quickly receded. Its thin transparent eyelids began to close uncontrollably as well.

Dunn's body started quivering, and something popped up under his clothing and wriggled on the spot. It was as though he hid slippery scaleless snakes

within.

Lorotta rushed over and with a roll, arrived under Monster Bieber.

She supported herself with one hand while raising a clenched fist, bombarding Monster Bieber's crotch like artillery.

Poof!

She ignored the corrosive pain but supported herself against the ground and directed more strength once again. She went higher a little as her fist drilled deeper in.

Rip! Lorotta pulled out her forearm as she dragged out an intestine filled with brownish-yellow blood stains.

In the intestine, there was an ancient notebook.

"Ah!"

Monster Bieber let out a blood-curdling scream, and his body suddenly lit up as though it was melting.

"Get down!"

Just as Aiur Harson's hurried shout ended, Klein saw Monster Bieber suddenly swell up.

Boom!

Amid a loud explosion, the distant Klein was tossed into the air by the shockwave and landed heavily.

He struggled to stand against a swirling headache, and he saw Monster Bieber turn into a pile of disgusting, rotting flesh. Then he saw Dunn and

Lorotta, who were a dozen meters away, looking like they had been knocked out.

Aiur Harson, Borgia, and Leonard Mitchell were on the ground too. Some groaning in pain, some struggling to stand up but failing.

Klein was just about to relax when he suddenly saw a familiar object about two or three meters away from him.

The black chest had stopped rolling, and the cracked surface was facing the sky.

A skinny brown arm extended out.

*Sealed Artifact… 2-049… F**k!* Klein's heart tensed up as he immediately leaped in the opposite direction in a bid to escape 2-049's effective range.

The blast from before had thrown the black chest near him!

And at that moment, Klein's head suddenly buzzed as his thoughts turned sluggish.

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CHAPTER 75
SAVING HIMSELF

Oh no! I've been controlled by the puppet!

Captain and company are either unconscious… or have yet to recover. They can't even get up… They will not be able to… wake me up in time…

No… I have to… save myself!

Everything before Klein's eyes was happening in slow motion. All his joints and his brain seemed to have been coated with an ever-thickening layer of glue.

He had no interest in becoming a human-version puppet, so he seized the opportunity of not being fully controlled by trying his best to seek a way to save himself.

I definitely can't… hit myself… There must be an… external force…

External force… I'll give it a try… There's no time for hesitation… Without the luxury of time to think through things, Klein came to an idea in less than three seconds. He moved his "rusty" knee joint and took a counterclockwise step.

At the same time, he did not try to escape the invisible rope that "hung" around his throat. All he did was recite inwardly.

Blessings Stem… From The… Immortal Lord of… Heaven and Earth…

He wanted to use the mysterious world above the gray fog to awaken him and escape Sealed Artifact 2-049's assimilation!

Creak! Creak! Creak! Klein's knees and ankles let out an involved ear-piercing sound. With a slow contorted step, he took another step counterclockwise.

Blessings Stem… From The Sky Lord… of Heaven and Earth.

Klein's thoughts turned increasingly sluggish as he felt as though he was a computer that had all sorts of bloatware and every antivirus software installed. He lifted his left foot in a jerky manner as he took another step in the required spot.

Blessings Stem… From The… Exalted Thearch…

Klein's thought processes turned more and more rigid and sluggish. He took the final step purely out of instinct.

At that point, he knew he was almost fully under the puppet's control. Even if Aiur Harson could get up in time to save him, he would probably be unable to be awakened.

But his strong desire to live made him chant the final line of the incantation.

Blessings… Stem… From The… Celestial… Worthy…

Just as he finished his incantation, the extremely chaotic and hysterical shouts and murmurs sounded. They quickly took over every corner of Klein's sluggish thoughts, shattering them in the process and reducing them to thoughts he had no control over.

Klein's brain became a boiling pot of potpourri as his stiff body turned light while his spirituality lifted.

Endless grayish-white fog and the dark red stars of varying distances appeared once again before his eyes. It was vast, mysterious, vague, and blurry.

Klein's confused mind quickly settled down as he finally regained his ability to think, only to see the magnificent palace.

"Phew… Thankfully, it worked." he whispered with a lingering fear.

According to his previous observations, he knew that once someone fell under the control of Sealed Artifact 2-049, it was equivalent to death. Normally, there was no medicine that could save the victim.

Luckily, his luck enhancement ritual and the mysterious world above the gray fog was not considered normal at all!

After pacing a few times, Klein began considering the situation he was in.

I can't just stay here the entire time, right?

By the time Captain and company wakes up and gather over, I won't be able to explain the situation…

As things are right now, I only have the shell of my body, nothing more zombielike than a zombie…

But if I were to take the risk and return, there's no way to guarantee my safety… What if I get controlled by 2-049 again?

…

While suffering from his dilemma, Klein suddenly smacked himself in the forehead and could not help but chuckle softly.

"It looks like I haven't gotten used to my status as a Seer!"

Before he finished his sentence, he appeared at the seat of honor in front of the long bronze table, sitting on the high-back chair with the strange symbol.

Klein extended his hand as a fountain pen appeared out of thin air.

He scribbled a sentence on an illusory piece of paper.

"Returning to the real world is very safe."

Immediately following that, Klein pulled out a projection of a spirit pendulum from his packet. After a few Gatherings, he discovered that the items he brought on him were projected above the gray fog, but they were relatively illusory.

Klein held the silver chain with his left hand as he allowed the topaz to nearly touch the paper.

He calmed his breathing and half closed his eyes. He calmly repeated the words on the piece of paper.

"Returning to the real world is very safe."

…

"Returning to the real world is very safe."

…

After repeating it seven times, Klein completed the divination with spirit dowsing.

He opened his eyes and saw the topaz slowly oscillating, guiding the silver chain in a clockwise spin.

Clockwise is an affirmation while counterclockwise is negative… Returning to the real world is very safe… Klein heaved a sigh of relief as he habitually stored the chain away. Then, he released his spirituality and wrapped his body as he simulated a plummeting state.

The hazy fog and deep red stars turned ethereal and charged upward. Klein soon saw himself still in a daze in his original position. He saw the brown puppet, halfway out of the chest. He also noticed that the Sealed Artifact had apparently stopped all motion.

His physical senses reached to his brain and just as he was about to try to move his arm to determine his condition, he suddenly heard a voice concealed within the wind.

"Do you wish to be awakened? You can be saved as long as you promise me one thing.

"This one thing is to help me take that Antigonus family notebook.

"Nod if you agree. I know you are still capable of completing that action."

Who is it? Yes… 2-049 doesn't seem like it's attempting to control me… That's right. It will not repeatedly influence the same person. There will be a break… Klein was shocked, but he did not show it on his face.

At that moment, the voice added quickly, "You can obtain additional rewards if you complete this matter. I know you are a Seer. I also know that the Church of the Evernight Goddess does not have Sequence 8 that succeeds Sequence 9. But our Secret Order can give it to you.

"Heh, to be honest, I was a Seer before. If not, I wouldn't have dared return. To show you my sincerity, I can now tell you that the corresponding Sequence 8 of Seer is Clown."

Clown? Secret Order… Klein nearly did not maintain his "puppet" state.

He never made the connection between Seer and Clown.

Were they about to become the head honchos of a circus?

"Alright, make your choice. Believe me, you no longer have much time left to waste." The voice sounded with the wind again. The distant Dunn and Lorotta were still unconscious. Borgia seemed heavily injured as he moaned without moving. Aiur Harson and Leonard Mitchell were in relatively good shape as they attempted to sit up.

Why me? The Secret Order… Is it that suited clown from before? After he escaped, he secretly returned in a bid to fish in troubled waters… Upon hearing the voice, all sorts of doubts instantly flashed through Klein's mind.

Since the person said that he was a Seer, Klein attempted using the thought processes of a Seer to analyze the situation.

He dared return because he divined 'hope.' He believed that Monster Bieber would be destroyed and that we would suffer a heavy setback.

He did not take the notebook by himself or deal with us directly because he likely divined that it would contain immense risk. Therefore, he is suspecting Captain and Madam Lorotta are feigning their unconsciousness, or that this is a trap laid out for him.

He did not make further divinations to determine my present state partially because firstly, he might not have the time. If he waited any longer, Mr. Aiur Harson and company would have regained some of their combat strength. Secondly, he belittles me and thinks it unnecessary.

He understands a Seer very well and is confident that I'm unable to escape the puppet's control… He is using me as cannon fodder to probe for any traps…

From another angle, this also means that the luck enhancement ritual does not cause any abnormal appearances…

With his brain no longer sluggish, Klein felt that his line of reasoning was clear. He was quite confident of the thoughts and goals of the suited clown.

As for the clown's promise, he believed not one bit of it. Cannon fodder did not have any human rights!

As the thoughts flashed through his head, Klein controlled his neck and difficulty nodded.

As he did this action, he confirmed that he had escaped the control of Sealed Artifact 2-049.

Just after he nodded, a transparent "curtain" stirred two to three meters to his side. It revealed the suited clown who had his face painted with a clown's pastel colors. It was none other than the Secret Order member who had fled previously.

At that moment, as Klein had previously turned around in an attempt to leap out of 2-049's effective range, his back was facing the black chest and the puppet. The suited clown was in front of him to his side. First, it was to stay away from the Sealed Artifact and second, to avoid his revolver's barrel. It was clear that he was very careful.

The suited clown pulled out a long paper slip from his pocket and shook it vigorously until it turned straight like a wooden pole.

He held the wooden pole and at a distance of two to three meters, he gave Klein's shoulder a prod in an attempt to wake him.

This fellow knows 2-049 very well. He knows that if the scent of an Antigonus family descendant is present, the puppet would go ballistic and control two at a time… He also knows that throwing a rock doesn't seem effective. At the very least, I've seen Captain and company attempt similar means… Although Klein did not know why 2-049 had stopped assimilating him again, he did not dare stay within five meters of it any longer. Therefore, he waited as he held his breath.

Just as the wooden pole was about to touch his shoulder, Klein suddenly raised his left hand and grabbed the edge of the pole and yanked it backwards.

The suited clown was caught by surprise as his body was pulled forward. He staggered a few steps forward as the gap between him and Klein contracted once again. He was now less than two meters away.

At the same time, the prepared Klein squeezed his right finger on the revolver's trigger.

Bang! Bang!

He shot twice but did not aim at the suited clown. Instead, he had aimed behind him, shooting to the side of Sealed Artifact 2-049!

Before the gunshot rang, the suited clown had taken the initiative to roll from his staggering state. He had instinctively backed off.

Klein released his hand which had grabbed the wooden pole as he took several steps away rapidly and rushed out the danger zone.

Just as the suited clown rolled twice and was about to jump backwards, his head went abuzz as his thoughts rapidly turned sluggish.

No good!

He forced me to… dodge in the direction of the Antigonus puppet!

I'm within… five meters…

How could he… not be… controlled by… the Antigonus… puppet…

…

The suited clown stopped from his rolling as he attempted to crawl out with his seemingly rusty joints.

At that moment, Klein had already turned around. He held his revolver with both hands as he aimed at the slowly-moving target.

To him, that was equivalent to shooting a fixed target.

Having seen the suited clown's battle with Dunn, Aiur, and Lorotta, Klein knew that he was agile and good at rolling. Therefore, even when they were just a meter or two apart, he had carefully given up on shooting directly. Instead, he forced the clown to dodge to the "kill zone" he imagined—where Sealed Artifact 2-049 was!

If the puppet had been ineffective, the suited clown would have determined that he had fallen into a trap. He would then escape by leaping backwards and not pose any significant threat.

Bang!

Reflected into the indescribable eyes of the suited clown, the black-suited Klein pulled the trigger calmly.

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CHAPTER 76
DEALING WITH THE AFTERMATH

Bang!

The silver bullet traversed the short distance of a few meters and accurately bore into the suited clown's neck. Large amounts of blood spewed out, dyeing his skin and bow tie red.

The suited clown was unable to let out a cry as his throat seemed to produce sounds of him gasping for breath. He wished to raise his arm to divert the fatal wound, but his joints appeared to be filled with glue. His motions were slow and jerky.

Bang!

Having entered a half-Cogitation state, Klein was not stunned by the appearance of blood. He pulled the trigger once again calmly, as though it was his usual daily practice.

A grisly hole appeared on the suited clown's forehead as crimson red spewed out. The luster in his eyes dimmed as the intricate revolver's might was far higher than what Klein had imagined to be.

As his knees buckled and his arms hung down, the suited clown gradually fell to the ground. His eyes were frozen with a dazed look.

His body convulsed a few times before it slowly relaxed and stopped moving.

Having delivered a headshot, Klein turned around in a cool manner. He spun his revolver and allowed the empty shells to fall down.

Then, dressed in his black formal suit and halved top hat, he walked towards Aiur Harson. He pulled out the final silver demon hunting bullet in his pocket and inserted it into the revolver's chamber.

The reason why he did not turn back to look at the suited clown's tragic fate was solely because of his discomfort with his first kill. However, it was necessary. He did not know what would happen if the suited clown was under the full control of the puppet.

Furthermore, he did not dare risk entering Sealed Artifact 2-049's effective range. After all, no one knew if something odd would happen that prevented his self-rescuing luck enhancement ritual to fail.

As for the items on the suited clown, Klein only cared if there was the so-called Clown potion formula or the relevant clues. However, this was not something he was in a hurry to carry out. In a while, he could do it together with Dunn, Aiur, and company. If the Nighthawks had it, it also practically meant that he had it. There was no way that they would be unwilling to share the potion formula of Sequence 8. At most, he would be required to accumulate his contributions over time. After all, he had only become a Seer recently; it would still be a long time until he fully digested it.

As his thoughts churned, Klein quickly walked next to Aiur Harson. The gentleman in his gray windbreaker struggled to sit up but failed at every try. He was covered in dust and mud from the fall.

"Mr. Harson, what do you need me to do?" he asked, squatting down. He pointed the revolver in his hand at the ground in case of a misfire.

Aiur gasped for air and sighed.

"The monster was too strong; if not for its weakness…”

Then, he pointed at a sky-blue metal bottle beside him and said in a self-deprecating laugh, "I was trying to consume some medicine, but my hand shook…”

The sky-blue bottle was about the size of Klein's finger. It was not longer than five centimeters long and a cap that hid spiral patterns had fallen to the side. The liquid had completely spilled.

Klein reached out to pick up the bottle. As he looked at it with narrowed eyes, he answered helplessly, "Mr. Harson, there are only a few drops left in the bottle."

"Go to… Borgia and search his body. In his inner pockets." Aiur said as he gasped for breath.

"Alright." Klein stood up and casually asked, "Is this restorative medicine?"

An item from mysticism?

"No, it only has certain restorative effects. The main goal is to stimulate our minds and squeeze out the potential… of our bodies. It allows to maintain a decent state for a short period of time until we return, where we can receive treatment." Aiur attempted to sit up only to fail again. "It's name is the Goddess's Gaze… Remember to let Borgia drink half a bottle."

Klein did not delay any further as he turned around. He briskly arrived at Borgia who was groaning in pain. He found the uniform sky-blue metal bottle from the Nighthawk's pocket.

After removing the cap, he carefully held the bottle to Borgia's mouth.

Having sensed it, Borgia tried hard to open his lips.

The bottle was held up as dark red liquid flowed in Borgia's mouth.

Klein estimated the quantity and stopped just in time. He then screwed the cap back on.

The medicine was rather effective. It only took Borgia a few seconds after drinking to regain the spirit in his eyes. Furthermore, he whispered, "Thank you."

With that said, he pressed down on the ground as he slowly sat up. He first dealt with his wounds before walking to the unconscious Lorotta and Dunn. Then, he retrieved the Goddess's Gaze from the latter's inner pocket.

Klein returned to Aiur's side and fed him the remaining half bottle.

After Aiur panted a few times, his actions suddenly became nimbler. He stood up as though he had never been injured.

"I'll help Borgia. Help that partner of yours." The gentleman with the charm of a middle-aged man pointed at Leonard Mitchell.

Klein had no objections to it. He turned around and jogged to the "poet," Leonard.

"There's no need. I can drink it by myself." Leonard, with his disheveled hair, smiled as he raised the sky-blue bottle.

Upon seeing Leonard agilely get up by pushing up with one hand, Klein, who wanted to lampoon, was suddenly stunned.

Leonard's injuries are lighter than I expected…

He had the ability to consume the medicine from the very beginning!

That also means that he could see me walk counterclockwise as I did the luck enhancement ritual!

No, that's still alright. I had chanted inwardly and the luck enhancement ritual does not appear odd in any way, or the suited clown would not have fallen for it…

But even so, Leonard, who had long recovered but chose to watch by the sidelines, had seen quite a lot. Things like me not being affected by 2-049 and my sneak attack on the suited clown…

Just as Klein's eyes narrowed slightly, Leonard, who was walking in his direction, stopped beside him and chuckled softly.

"I actually wanted to save you but discovered that you didn't need it.

"Don't mind it. There are many special people in this world that can always do things others can't, such as you…"

"…and me." Leonard smiled as he went past Klein and walked to the awakening Dunn and Lorotta.

Narcissist… Klein thought silently as he felt a lot more relaxed.

From the looks of it, Leonard Mitchell hid quite a bit of secrets… As he regrouped with the rest while deep in thought, he saw Captain Dunn wear a glove and pick up the Antigonus family notebook that was covered in yellowish-brown blood stains.

The notebook's cover was completely made of thick black paper. It suffused an aura from an ancient and distant time without any signs of softening or rotting. It was nearly identical to the one he saw in his dream. He even suspected that flipping it open would only make him see the Fool wearing splendid headgear.

However, he soon realized that he was overthinking things since Dunn had flipped open the notebook to make a final confirmation.

Klein was unable to discern the words on it due to his poor angle, but he was certain that there was no drawing of the Fool with his gorgeous clothes and splendid headdress.

"Ahem. There's nothing wrong with it." Dunn closed the notebook and held it securely. Then, he looked at Aiur and company. "Let's store this notebook and Sealed Artifact 2-049 behind Tingen's Chanis Gate. We can wait until all of you are recovered or Backlund sends someone over."

Upon hearing that, Klein felt a little disappointed once again, but also felt happy. He wished to see the Antigonus family's notebook once more and figure out the reason for the death of the original Klein, Welch, and Naya. However, he also felt that the ancient item was filled with misfortune. It often brought catastrophe, so he did not dare touch it.

Handing it to the Church's headquarters and sealing it is considered the best choice… He secretly heaved a sigh of relief.

"Alright." Aiur Harson, Borgia, and Lorotta nodded in unison. They then turned around and arrived beside Sealed Artifact 2-049.

They woke each other up and stuffed the puppet which had resumed moving into the black chest with an opening as they monitored it strictly.

"Everything is back to normal." Aiur sounded a little more relaxed.

Inside the dimly lit black chest, the puppet wrapped in oil-stained cloth flipped over with its body creaking as it aligned its clown-painted face with the light source.

On the creepy face, under the black pupil-less eyes, two hardly noticeable crimson cracks appeared.

Meanwhile, Dunn, Leonard, and Klein, who had mustered his courage, began searching the suited clown's corpse. They found paper flowers, handkerchiefs, poker cards, glass pieces, and all sorts of strange items.

However, apart from that, he did not seem to carry anything of worth or potential clues.

Hmm, other than the wallet with seventy to eighty pounds and ten plus soli… Klein secretly sighed.

With money in mind, he immediately looked down and inspected himself. His face nearly fell literally.

His formal suit that cost several pounds had torn in five to six spots which required mending due to his rolling on the ground. Furthermore, it was covered in dust and dirt stains.

Dunn shot him a glance as the corner of his lips curved up.

"Losses during a mission can be reimbursed."

Reimbursed… Upon hearing the term "invented" by Emperor Roselle, Klein instantly felt wonderful.

Yeah. This suit just needs some proper cleaning and mending before it can be worn again. It will still be presentable…

When the reimbursement comes, I can buy another set and I can take turns wearing them!

Hmm, I am not the kind of person that uses a reimbursement for something other than what it was intended for…

However, I should consider getting a set of clothes for combat in the future, such as a black windbreaker like Captain… Clothes with slightly poorer material would be much cheaper than a tuxedo… Tsk, has the reason why the bastard, Leonard, doesn't like wearing formal suits been due to him having such considerations…

"Let Frye take care of the dead body. We'll see if he can find what the man originally looked like or find any relevant clues." Dunn touched the suited clown's face paint with his gloves.

Then, they searched the innermost warehouse and saw that there were a splotches of bloody flesh that looked like they had been smashed by boulders. They also saw one white bone after another that had been strewn everywhere.

"Ray Bieber was absorbing the power in the notebook via an ancient ritual, just like how we would consume a higher-level Sequence potion. A ritual like that is full of danger. It must be performed in an environment isolated from all disturbances, and the ritual would have required him to enter a deep sleep for a certain amount of time. That was probably why he had yet to leave Tingen." Dunn guessed at the possibilities after inspecting the warehouse.

Upon hearing such a description, Lorotta laughed. Her black hair contrasted sharply with her pale face.

"Such a pity, we awakened him ahead of time. His anger at being woken up truly left a deep impression on us."

"This is a kind of losing control," Dunn looked towards Klein and told him, as both an explanation and a lecture.

"Why didn't he just leave Tingen and try to absorb it elsewhere?" asked a perplexed Klein.

Aiur laughed and pointed to his head.

"People influenced by ancient or sinister powers often are lacking in this department."

At that moment, Dunn inhaled and said while hiding his pain, "Leonard, you are still in good condition. Stay here and do not allow ordinary people

to come close… The rest of us will immediately search for items among Ray Bieber's remains. We will return with them and the Sealed Artifact, as well as the Antigonus family's notebook. We will then get Frye, Royale, and the police to come here."

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CHAPTER 77
REMNANT ITEMS

"Alright," answered Leonard with a relaxed expression when he heard Dunn's suggestion.

Following that, everyone walked out of the warehouse and came close to where Monster Bieber had "self-destructed." With him at the origin, they began searching outwards radially.

"Captain, what are we looking for?" Klein looked at the rotting flesh and blood that was strewn everywhere. He held back his urge to retch as he looked at Dunn Smith beside him ponderingly.

Dunn did not look up. Instead, he used his deep gray eyes to sweep the ground.

"Awakening ahead of time, losing control, and becoming a monster. This means that Ray Bieber did not fully absorb the Beyonder powers provided by the notebook. It also means that a part of his body is considered extraordinary, making it prime material."

"If you ever encounter something similar, make sure not to miss out on doing a search. It might be a relatively important item."

So that's the case… Klein nodded slightly in enlightenment.

In the blink of an eye, he thought of another matter.

If the part where Monster Bieber had concentrated the Beyonder powers were some indescribable part, wouldn't that be awkward… Wouldn't it be

extremely disgusting to concoct it into a potion…

Just as Klein's mind wandered, Borgia with his sharp eagle-like eyes suddenly shouted.

"Found it. Ahem."

Dunn and company immediately turned and closed in. Driven by his curiosity, Klein walked over to Borgia with a quickened pace.

Soon, he saw the item before Borgia. It was a grayish-white item about the size of a fist. Its surface was filled with gullies and it looked soft but ductile. It looked like a brain that had been extracted out of a living being.

Although Klein was unable to make out the extraordinariness of the blob of grayish-white, he was certain that Borgia had not made a mistake since it had remained intact despite the violent explosion it had undergone.

Dunn carefully observed it and squatted down. As he extended and bent his right arm, he used his black-gloved left hand to carefully grab the grayish-white item.

The moment it was touched, the blob of grayish-white immediately spread out into an extremely sticky liquid.

At that moment, Aiur Harson took out a tin-colored square case, removed the cigarettes from them and placed them into his pocket.

Then, he handed the square case to Dunn and smiled.

"I know, you only like pipes."

Dunn chuckled and took the square case. Then, he "poured" the grayish-white sticky liquid into the case for temporary storage.

After storing it away, everyone did a cursory sweep of the area.

After confirming that they had not missed out anything, they left. When they came out, they saw the horses digging their hooves into the ground, clearly spooked and nervous. They had nearly escaped their reins.

"I'll drive." Borgia covered his mouth with his hand and coughed softly.

"I know you are good at placating animals," said Aiur with a smiling nod.

After boarding the carriage, Dunn, Lorotta, Aiur Harson, and Klein, who continued their "arm exercises," temporarily had nothing to say as they fell into silence.

When the trotting of the horses sounded while the carriage wheeled off, Dunn looked at Klein and deliberated over his words before saying, "I know you are filled with curiosity about the Antigonus family's notebook. You wish to understand what happened."

No, not at all… Klein subconsciously denied.

It was an ancient relic filled with misfortune!

Without giving him time to answer, Dunn continued and said, "However, I have to first report this to the Holy Cathedral. Only after they determine the confidentiality level of the notebook can we consider if this can be shown to you."

"No problem." Klein gave a short and simple reply.

Dunn continued his arm exercises as he thought before saying, "I once promised that you can be made a formal member of the Nighthawks when we confirm that Ray Bieber is a descendant of the Antigonus family clan. Now, not only have we determined Ray Bieber's identity, we have even eliminated the monster and spoiled the Secret Order's conspiracy.

"In this entire process, your performance was outstanding. You personally killed a member of an evil organization. Therefore, I will fulfill my promise

and immediately make an application to the Holy Cathedral. We'll wait for their approval.

"Right, I forgot something important. I still need to ask if you are agreeable to it.

"Mr Klein Moretti, are you willing to formally join the Tingen Nighthawks as one of its members? Your salary will increase severalfold, reaching six pounds a week. Furthermore, you will get a raise every subsequent year.

"Your salary will be paid by the Church and Awwa County's Police Department equally. You will also gain the identity of a probationary inspector. It will be very useful at times.

"As a support-type Beyonder, you do not always need to face enemies, but you will have to guard Chanis Gate once a week…

"Without the squad's permission, you are not to leave Tingen. Furthermore, you have to keep this a secret from your family…"

…

By the time Dunn finished listing the restrictions and benefits, Klein was already thinking deeply for more than ten seconds.

"I wish to become a formal Nighthawk."

Only by doing so could he continue to gain more access to mystery, such as the situation regarding the Secret Order!

After reading the gathered Roselle diaries, Klein had some changes in thoughts about himself. "Being skilled in mysticism knowledge to seek a way home was an immutable goal of his. Raising his strength further to more safely make the mysterious space above the gray fog do his bidding before using it to return home was a new addition to his goals.

Just as Emperor Roselle said, simply relying on external powers was very dangerous!

Furthermore, after becoming a Seer and obtaining Beyonder powers, Klein sensed that he had a better grasp of the mysterious space. For example, he could pull another person into the Gathering.

This forced him to consider what possibly beneficial changes would happen to the mysterious space above the gray fog when he reached Sequence 8, Sequence 7, or an even higher Sequence.

Of course, Klein knew very well that this was built on the premise that he completely resolved the side effects of the Seer potion. He could not rush or be rash.

"Very well. Once the Holy Cathedral approves of it, you will become one of us." Dunn's gray eyes were tinted with a hint of joy.

At that moment, Aiur Harson, who was listening in, interrupted.

"Klein, don't mind me calling you Klein. Your performance today was really excellent. You managed to kill a Beyonder from the Secret Order. I even suspect that he has reached Sequence 7. How did you do it? I really find it incredulous."

The question has finally been raised… Having long prepared for it, Klein acted as though he was organizing his thoughts.

He knew that it was indeed incredible and enigmatic that he had killed a Beyonder that ran rings around Dunn, Aiur, and Lorotta. Aiur and company were not blind or dumb, so it was a matter of time before they inquired about the process. However, he never expected them to wait till this moment.

That's right. Captain and Mr. Harson were previously injured and their situations could have worsened at any time. At that moment, any matter that

could result in conflict had to be put on hold. It was to prevent me from acting desperately because of my exposed "secret." Only after I expressed my attitude and showed that I was willing to be a Nighthawk were they at ease enough to ask… How crafty. They did not have any obvious communication between themselves, but they had made the same tacit decision…

Klein answered as though in thought, "It's an extremely lucky event. The clown in the tuxedo had made a fatal misjudgment.

"Back then, Sealed Artifact 2-049 was thrown near me as a result of the explosion's blast. It looked about five to six meters from me, but it was only a crude observation. It was very easy to come to the conclusion that I was within the Sealed Artifact's area of influence.

"And back then, I was feeling faint because of the explosion. My actions turned sluggish and looked as though I was being controlled.

"It was unknown when that suited clown came close to me in an invisible state. He tried to entice me by offering to save me and the corresponding Sequence 8, Clown, of the Seer potion. He wanted me to help him retrieve the Antigonus family's notebook. Right, he said that the Secret Order is in control of the Seer potion's corresponding Sequence pathway and that he was once a Seer."

…

Klein recounted the situation back then in detail. He even described the theories he had back then, including how he believed that the suited clown had divined that taking the notebook would be an extremely risky endeavor; thus, he had changed his plans.

Of course, all the truths were used to conceal the lie made in the beginning —that he had been controlled by Sealed Artifact 2-049.

"Divined that it was extremely risky to retrieve the notebook? Yes, it's indeed highly risky. However, the risk was actually because of you," said Lorotta with a chuckle as she covered her mouth. "His divination was right, but it caused him to end up in a fatal situation. This sure is an interesting account."

Klein was taken aback before he nodded seriously.

"Indeed. Divination is never crystal clear. And that vagueness only means that an interpretation can be wrong."

Yes, I have to take note of that!

"How did you finish him off after that?" asked Dunn while he did his arm exercises and leaned back.

Klein smiled.

"I pretended to agree to him and made him awaken me. However, he did not dare enter the effective range of the Sealed Artifact. He stayed two to three meters away and used a strange paper slip in an attempt to push me.

"I seized the opportunity and pulled at his paper slip, causing him to be thrown into 2-049's effective range. I then complemented it with repeated shots and completed my goal. Heh, it's quite an embarrassing matter for me. I didn't even have the confidence of hitting him despite being only two to three meters away from him."

Aiur nodded slightly.

"With his evasive abilities, a distance of two to three meters is not an absolute guarantee. You might be able to strike him but fail to hit him in a vital spot. That would only make things worse… Your choice back then was impeccable. It can even be said to be outstanding. If I were in your shoes, I might not have been able to do it better than you."

He did not ask further. After all, the suited clown's entry into the Sealed Artifact 2-049's area of influence basically sealed his fate. He became a living target.

"The subsequent Sequence of Seer is Clown… How odd…” Dunn suddenly said with a sigh.

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CHAPTER 78
TRAUMA

Aiur Harson added, "Exactly, it is hard to imagine that the subsequent Sequence of Seer would be Clown. According to normal logic, no one would link them together."

"Is that strange? I remember that quite a number of Sequence potions also seem to lack similarities between their different levels." Lorotta covered her mouth as she yawned. It was obvious that her injuries were more severe. Not even Goddess's Gaze could help her to maintain her vibrant energy.

"No, Lorotta. This is completely different. Even if the other Sequence potions are lacking a connection, we can also find common points if viewed from a different angle. However, I cannot comprehend it for Seer and Clown at all," said Aiur Harson as he shook his head and sighed.

Klein listened to their discussion and laughed.

"No, there's still a common point."

"What?" Aiur asked curiously. Even Dunn's arm exercises clearly slowed down.

Klein replied without hesitation, "Be it a Seer or a Clown, both of them can be found at the circus."

"…” Aiur, Dunn, and Lorotta were stunned.

"Pfft… Quite a good answer. I like young man like you!" Lorotta was the first to return to her senses as she burst out laughing.

Aiur also smiled as he shook his head.

"In this era, the number of gentlemen who are equipped with the spirit of self-deprecation is decreasing. Thankfully, we have met one today."

Do you think I like to engage in self-deprecation… It's not like I figured out any commonality between the two… Klein complained internally as he replied with a wry smile, "I only wish that the potions of the Sequence pathway would not have names like Beast Tamer, Acrobat, or Magician. That would really form a circus."

Furthermore, it's a one-man circus…

"Haha." Dunn and company were immediately amused. It filled the carriage with a joyous atmosphere.

The carriage proceeded straight for Zouteland Street. Klein, who was not injured, was the first to enter Blackthorn Security Company.

"Goddess! What happened to you? Why are you like that?" Rozanne exclaimed when she caught sight of him.

Klein looked down at his dirty and tattered suit. He replied with his heart aching, "There are always all kinds of accidents during a mission. Thankfully, the Goddess blessed us and it ended beautifully."

"Praise the Lady!" Rozanne devoutly drew the crimson moon across her chest.

Before waiting for Klein to continue, she asked, "Do you need us to hide in the third floor again? Is the Sealed Artifact really that dangerous?"

"Trust me. It's far more dangerous than you can imagine," replied Klein with a lingering fear.

If not for his even more mysterious luck enhancement ritual, he would have perished under the proverbial hands of 2-049!

"Goddess…" Rozanne's lips quivered as though she had still a million things to say or questions to ask, but in consideration of how the captain was waiting downstairs, she held back her compulsion. She informed Mrs. Orianna and company to head upstairs to the third floor. The neighbors of Blackthorn Security Company were either estates of the Church, or devout clergymen who vaguely knew of the situation.

When all the civilian staff dispersed, Klein did not rush to the recreation room to inform the other Nighthawks. He immediately returned and helped the captain and the rest escort Sealed Artifact 2-049, Monster Bieber's remnants, and the Antigonus family's notebook to the second floor.

Through the partition, Dunn pushed open the recreation room's door and said to the two Nighthawks who were playing Gwent cards, "Frye, Royale, both of you are to immediately head to the harbor's Tyrell Warehouse and aid Leonard in dealing with the aftermath."

"Alright." Royale with her raven-black hair and cold expression was the first to stand up.

Corpse Collector Frye, with his black hair, blue eyes, and pale skin stood up next.

They put down their Gwent cards and walked out the recreation room and when they passed through the partition, they clearly paused.

"Wait," Dunn shouted, not letting down their expectations.

"What else is there?" Sleepless Royale turned her head back and asked without an expression.

"Remember to inform the police. Let them seal off the road. Prevent anyone from coming close until you are done with the scene and move the corpse

back," Dunn said, smacking his forehead.

"Alright." Royale turned around and took two steps before pausing once again.

She turned her head, blinked and confirmed coldly, "Captain, is there nothing else?"

"No," Dunn answered categorically.

Royale nodded unnoticeably and walked towards the entrance.

As for Corpse Collector Frye who exuded coldness and darkness, he maintained his adequate pace.

At that moment, Dunn added, "Remember to tell Rozanne, Mrs. Orianna, and company that they can come down."

"No problem." Frye calmly replied as though no emotions stirred in him.

Klein watched as the two Nighthawks walked out the door and went upstairs before heaving a secret sigh of relief. He followed the captain and the rest underground. They proceeded straight to Chanis Gate.

As Dunn gestured for Sleepless Kenley to open Chanis Gate, he instructed Klein, "Go to the armory and get Old Neil here. We need his ritualistic magic to heal ourselves."

As the effects of the medicine began to wear off, his mental state gradually waned.

"Alright." Klein did not wait for the captain to continue, as he added, "I will watch the armory in Old Neil's place. I will also request for at least twenty demon hunting bullets and also wait for the Holy Cathedral's approval, curbing my curiosity about the Antigonus family's notebook."

"…” Dunn was instantly at a loss for words.

"Captain, is there anything else?" asked Klein with a smile after beating Dunn to it.

Dunn shook his head and remained speechless.

He pulled out his cane and turned around. After walking a certain distance, Klein turned into the armory and recounted the happenings generally to Old Neil who was drinking plain water.

"He became a monster that lost control… You even killed a Beyonder?" Old Neil quickly tidied up his desk. "It's like I'm listening to the script of a play."

He mumbled as he circled around the desk and walked straight towards the corridor without waiting for Klein's answer.

Klein asked out of curiosity, "Mr. Neil, doesn't the Church have real restorative medicine? Why would ritualistic magic be needed?"

"No medicine made with ordinary ingredients can provide the permanent restorative effects of a ritual. Extraordinary ingredients are very rare, and most of them are not suitable for restorative medicine," Old Neil explained casually. "You should know about Goddess's Gaze, right? When the medicine is first made via a ritual, it would be a standard, real restorative medicine. But every minute after its completion, its effect evaporates until little of its efficacy is left."

"I see…” Klein nodded disappointedly.

As a former "keyboard warrior" and avid gamer, it was a habit to yearn for a medicine with magical healing properties.

He watched Old Neil leave and sat down, taking in the tranquility that he had not had in a very long time.

In the midst of his peace, he recalled the tragic death of the suited clown. He recalled himself shooting coldly, the gruesome wound and the spewing of fresh blood.

Klein's body shivered as he felt discomfort. He first stood up, then sat down, then slowly repeated the process. He also did some pacing back and forth in between.

Phew… He let out a breath and decided to occupy himself with something so that he could stop thinking of those negative images.

Klein took off his silk hat and formal suit. He then took out a handkerchief and a brush to clean off the dirt and mud.

After an uncertain amount of time, he heard Old Neil's familiar footsteps. Old Neil's gait involved him walking on his heels, and it made a distinctive noise as he ambled down the hall.

"How tiring…” Old Neil complained as he walked into the room.

"Tell the rest that no one is to come here within the next hour. I need to rest," he instructed casually, glancing towards Klein.

"Why don't you rest upstairs, and I keep watch here?" Klein suggested out of kindness.

Old Neil shook his head.

"It's too noisy upstairs. Rozanne is a lady who just can't stop talking."

"Alright." Klein did not insist. He put on his coat and hat, picked up his cane, and returned to the corridor. Then, he pulled the armory's door ajar.

Tap. Tap. Tap. He slowly walked on the empty path when he suddenly saw many rooms he had never seen previously by the side.

"There is a secret door here…" Klein stopped at a spot around a bend as he looked at the room.

He discovered that Corpse Collector Frye had already returned. He was carefully examining a completely dissected corpse.

Corpse? Klein's heart stirred as he mustered his courage and approached the room. He knocked lightly on the opened door.

Knock! Knock! Knock!

Frye stopped his actions and turned around, looking over with his blue but ice-cold eyes.

"Sorry for disturbing you. I just wish to know if this is a corpse of a Beyonder," asked Klein as he controlled his tone.

"Yes." Frye's lips opened and closed, but only spat out a single word.

Klein's gaze reached beyond him and landed on the corpse. Indeed, he discovered the familiar gruesome wound on the forehead.

It's that suited clown… Klein secretly exhaled and said, "Any discoveries?"

"No," answered Frye in an abnormally simple manner.

The mood instantly turned awkward. Just as Klein was about to bade farewell, Frye took the initiative to say, "If you feel uncomfortable, you can come in to take a look. You will discover that it's only a corpse."

Afraid that I'll be traumatized? Klein nodded in thought.

"Alright."

He entered the room and came in front of the long white-clothed table as he looked at the corpse.

The suited clown's red, yellow, and white paint had been cleaned off, revealing an unfamiliar face that did not look anything special. He was in his thirties and had black hair and a high nose bridge.

At that moment, Frye went to a square table by the corner of the wall and picked up a pencil and piece of paper.

He returned to the corpse and placed the paper down and began drawing with the pencil.

Klein glanced at it in curiosity and found that Frye was sketching the suited clown's head.

It did not take long before Frye stopped moving the pencil. On the piece of paper, there was a lifelike portrait. Compared to the corpse, the only difference was the lack of a wound with the addition of blue eyes.

What a talented genius… Klein marveled in surprise.

"I never expected you to be that good at sketching."

"My dream was to become an artist before becoming a Nighthawk." Frye's tone was completely placid.

"Then why don't you fulfill your dreams?" asked Klein curiously.

Frye put down his pencil and said with the suited clown's portrait in hand, "My father was a priest of the Goddess. He wished that I become a priest. It's a presentable job."

"You became a priest?" Klein asked in surprise.

He found it unimaginable that Frye could become a priest with his personality and the vibes he exuded.

"Yeah, I did quite an okay job." Frye wore a cold expression as the corners of his mouth curled up a little as he replied. "Later, I encountered and experienced some things and ended up a Nighthawk."

Klein did not plan on infringing on his privacy, so he asked, "You were once a priest of the Goddess, so why not choose to be a Sleepless?"

"A personal reason," answered Frye frankly. "Furthermore, Madam Daly is a good role model."

Klein nodded and just as he was about to change the subject, he heard Frye say, "Help me watch this room. I have to immediately hand the sketch to Captain… Closing a secret door is very troublesome."

"Alright." Although Klein was a little afraid facing a corpse alone, he braved his fear in agreement.

With Frye gone, the room turned quiet. The corpse laid there as Klein's heart turned heavy.

He took a few breaths and, in a bid to defeat his fears, approached the long table.

The suited clown lay there silently with his pale face. His eyes were tightly shut, and he had lost all signs of breathing. Apart from the gruesome wound, he emitted the unique coldness of a dead man.

Klein observed for a moment as his emotions gradually settled as he was calming down.

He swept his gaze and discovered a strange brand on the suited clown's wrist. Gathering his courage, he extended his hand to touch it, hoping to turn it around to see it more clearly.

Just as the ice-cold touch reached from Klein's fingertips to his brain, the pale palm that had lost all vibrancy shot up suddenly, grabbing him by the

wrist.

It grabbed at his wrist tightly!

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CHAPTER 79
ANOTHER MURMURING

Klein instantly felt his hair stand on end as the icy hand tightened around his wrist. He instinctively pulled his wrist back in a desperate attempt to escape.

A heavy sensation bore down on him as Klein used every fiber of strength in his entire body to yank his arm back.

Bam!

The pale, naked corpse was yanked so forcefully to the side that it fell from the autopsy table.

However, the white, ice-cold fingers' grip remained firmly latched onto Klein's wrist.

Klein momentarily lost the ability to think; the only thought that went through his mind was to draw his revolver and riddle the corpse in holes.

However, as he could not retract his dominant hand, he threw his black cane and desperately tried to retrieve his revolver from his holster to no avail.

At that moment, the corpse's eyes rose, revealing a pair of calm, blue eyes.

His mouth moved as he muttered, "Hornacis… Hornacis… Hornacis…”

After those three words were said, Klein was completely flustered as he felt that the fingers gripping onto his wrist began to loosen before dropping limp.

The suited clown's eyes were shut once again, as though nothing had happened at all.

If the pale corpse wasn't lying on the stone floor, Klein would have imagined that he had been struck by a hallucination spell.

He staggered backwards a few steps and felt that most of his body was trembling as a result of the shock and fear.

Phew… Phew… Klein gasped for air as he slowly regained control of his mental facilities. He looked at the corpse on the ground in alarm and fear.

He drew his revolver and carefully retreated from the room, one step at a time. After confirming that the corpse was motionless, he took a glance at his wrist of the hand holding onto his revolver.

There were five deep, red finger marks imprinted on his wrist. They silently described his encounter.

Klein calmed down as vulgarities filled his mind.

*F*cking hell. I almost died from the shock!*

After panting for more than ten seconds, he began assembling items in his mind to quickly compose himself.

He carefully recalled everything that he encountered and pieced them together.

Although he did not understand the reason for the suited clown's "resurrection," he acutely noticed an important point. The corpse had repeated the words "Hornacis!"

"It's Hornacis again…" Klein knitted his brows. "The Antigonus family's notebook has records of a Nation of the Evernight in the Hornacis mountain range. While in Cogitation or Spirit Vision, I would hear sounds that I

shouldn't be able to hear, and among those sounds is the word 'Hornacis'… Is the answer to all these questions on the Hornacis mountain range?… There might be massive danger lurking there. For example, an evil god might be sealed within and was using various forms of 'attraction' to achieve freedom."

While considering this, Klein carefully entered the room and touched the corpse a few times to verify that it was completely dead.

He didn't want Corpse Collector Frye to see him mess up the place, so he mustered his courage to move the corpse back onto the autopsy table.

Klein couldn't help but feel as though his heart was in his mouth throughout the process. The slightest movement could snap his tense nerves. Furthermore, the ice-cold feeling given out by the corpse felt particularly disgusting.

After finishing the mission with great difficulty, he recalled the reason he approached the corpse. Therefore, he focused on the suited clown's wrist and looked at the strange brand.

It was unknown when the brand had slipped off, shrinking into a spherical blob of blood which had tint of blue.

The spherical blob of blood was the size of a thumb. It floated in midair silently in defiance of the laws of physics.

"What is this?" Klein muttered, but he didn't dare to touch it rashly.

He had no intention of hiding the strange blood sphere. Firstly, he didn't know if it was a good or bad thing. Secondly, he was certain that Frye, who had examined the corpse, would have long discovered the brand on the wrist. It was even likely that he knew what the strange blood sphere was.

And even if Frye doesn't know, reporting it to Captain and letting the Nighthawks research it is definitely better than me making random

attempts.… That was Klein's train of thought.

Being in an organization meant he had to know how to make use of the organization's powers to its fullest.

Klein waited nervously for a few minutes before he saw the black-haired, blue-eyed, and thin-lipped Frye return.

He instantly noticed the strange blood sphere, and asked Klein a question he had previously asked himself.

"What is this?"

"No idea." Klein shook his head honestly. He recounted what had happened without hiding anything.

"The brand slipped off into a blood sphere…" Frye nodded, seemingly deep in thought. "The corpse of a Beyonder always tends to have some strange transformations…"

He looked up and said to Klein, "Bring the Captain here. Inform him about the contents that the corpse murmured as well."

"Alright." Klein was already itching to leave.

"You don't have to return with the Captain," Frye added. "I believe you won't like to see what happens next."

As he spoke, he picked up a silver surgical knife beside him.

Klein nodded with some lingering fear.

"I was hoping you'd say that."

He picked up his cane, wore his hat and hobbled over to the Chanis Gate. At the Keeper's room, he saw the no longer frail Captain Dunn.

After Dunn heard his recollection of what happened, he nodded indiscernibly.

"I'll report the matter to the higher ups and let the Holy Cathedral deal with it. Maybe they'll send people to the main peak of the Hornacis mountain range to take a look."

Klein answered briefly in confirmation. Seeing that only Sleepless Kenley and the Captain were in the Keeper's room, he casually asked, "Are Mr. Aiur and the others resting?"

Dunn nodded and said, "Aiur and Borgia are at Saint Selena Cathedral. Lorotta is probably looking for a coffee shop."

"Coffee shop? Madam Lorotta hasn't recovered from her injuries, right?" Klein asked in surprise.

Dunn massaged his nose bridge and said with a laugh, "Lorotta has three hobbies—coffee, dessert, and maidservants. She says she needs these three things to speed up her recovery."

"Maidservants?" Klein asked, perplexed.

Does Madam Lorotta have a particular fetish?

Dunn shook his head helplessly and said, "She likes maidservants. Yeah, that's right. Furthermore, she likes ones with big breasts."

“…She sure is weird." Klein had no idea what kind of expression he should show in response.

Dunn didn't delay any further as he headed out the Keeper's room. As Klein watched his back, he silently waited for him to turn.

Meanwhile, he noticed at the corner of his eye that Sleepless Kenley had fished out his pocket watch and opened it.

Three, two, one… The moment Klein finished counting down silently, Dunn stopped and turned around.

"Another thing I forgot. Klein, you went through a lot today. Once you relax, you'll feel exhausted. There's no need for you to be here in the afternoon. Go back and get some rest. Tomorrow, I'll submit the application listing the detailed losses."

"Alright. Don't worry too much about your killing of a Beyonder. Killing him was equivalent to saving more lives."

"As a matter of fact, I'm actually feeling much better." Klein silently exhaled.

Dunn nodded slightly and just as he turned around, he smacked himself in the forehead.

"I've also handed the Beyonder's sketch to Leonard. He and the police department are in charge of the follow up investigations. I believe that the Beyonder must've rode on carriages, eaten food, and had somewhere to stay.

"Wherever he goes, whatever he touches, whatever he leaves behind, even unconsciously, will serve as a silent witness against him. Emperor Roselle's words are truly sensible."

"…Yes." Klein answered, stupefied.

After the captain walked far away, he left the Keeper's room and slowly walked to the second floor.

Along the way, he suddenly recalled something as he experienced an additional bout of fear.

That suited clown claimed that the Secret Order controlled the corresponding Sequence pathway of Seers… Even if he was exaggerating

and they didn't have the higher Sequence potion formulas, they definitely have the lower Sequence ones.

It also means that they have a number of Seers.

Then, wouldn't they divine that I killed the suited clown and secretly exact revenge against me?

If they can't deal with the Nighthawks, can't they deal with me, a Seer without any direct measures against enemies?

Klein stopped in the stairwell and began thinking about the problem seriously. Soon, he discovered that he was worrying over nothing.

Firstly, the Secret Order doesn't know who are members of the Nighthawks.

Secondly, even if they know one or two, they definitely wouldn't include a civilian staff member like me.

Thirdly, under the present circumstances, unless they have a prophet, there's no way they can divine who the murderer is.

He heaved a sigh of relief and left the Blackthorn Security Company. He took a public carriage back to Daffodil Street.

Even though he hadn't eaten lunch yet, he still lacked the appetite.

After entering his bedroom, Klein removed his damaged suit first. Then, he took off his half top hat, got into bed and tried to go to sleep.

His mind remained active as though his entire existence couldn't relax. His mind wasn't repeating the scene of him shooting the suited clown to death, but of the scene of him moving the corpse, and that hair-raising experience.

He no longer felt uncomfortable about killing for the first time, but more of a disgust when he thought about it.

"This was probably Frye's goal. He hoped that I would approach the corpse and face it directly to overcome my trauma… But, even though the trauma from before is gone, I've been traumatized by something new…" Klein gave a self-deprecating laugh as he gradually felt his nerves calm down.

He had no idea when he dozed off, but when he woke up, his stomach was groaning in protest.

"I feel like I can eat an entire horse!" Klein muttered as he looked at the sun setting in the west as though the sky was alit.

Changing into old but comfortable casual clothes, he briskly walked to the first floor. Before he could consider what to make for dinner, he heard the door open.

Melissa… The corners of his mouth curled up at the thought.

Ever since she began taking the public carriage, his sister no longer returned home late.

The key twisted as the door opened. Melissa walked in with her bag that contained her books and stationery.

She looked at the kitchen and said, "Klein, there's a letter for you. It's from your mentor."

A letter from Mentor? Right. I wrote to him asking about the relevant historical situation of the Hornacis main peak… Klein was taken aback at first before he recalled the matter.

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CHAPTER 80
BANQUET INVITATION

After having dinner, a satiated Klein casually lounged on the living room sofa. He used a small letter opener to open the letter he received from his mentor.

Melissa was sitting by the dining table at the time, working hard on a textbook problem, with the gas lamp for illumination. Benson was cradled in a single seater, reading Accountancy for Beginners.

Klein found three pages in the letter that he read with both fear and anticipation.

“…very happy to receive your letter. It reminds me of the good old days over the past few years. Unfortunately, Welch and Naya have left us forever…”

"I attended their burials separately and could feel their parents' anguish. The two of them were young adults who were supposed to have beautiful, bright futures ahead of them…”

"Fate is always so unpredictable. No one can know what will happen to you next. I've experienced more as I've grown older, and I can increasingly sense the weakness and helplessness of humanity."

“…Regarding the historical information revolving around the Hornacis main peak, I recall that the archaeologist, Mr. John Joseph, once published a monograph detailing it. It includes his accounts of his time at the Hornacis main peak. He discovered a few ancient buildings that are more than a thousand years old."

"What shames every historian and archaeologist is our inability to precisely date the era. We can only make a crude estimate based on the architecture style, the characteristics of the murals, and a few of the texts that we can decipher."

"It's quite unbelievable that such a tall mountain peak would have humans living there. Mr. Joseph has ample evidence to prove that those humans developed a civilization that they can call their own. As for the details, it is hard to fully describe them in this letter. I suggest you try borrowing this monograph from the Deweyville Library. Trust me, Sir Deweyville's donation to this library makes it have more books in its collection than the one built by the city government."

"The monograph's title is Research of the Hornacis Main Peak's Relics. It is published by the Loen Publishing Firm."

"In addition, there are some papers that discuss something of relevance. They are published in the journals—New Archeology, Archeology Summary. The exact issue and journal volume is…"

…

Klein read every word, and repeated the names of the monograph and paper names silently.

Immediately afterwards, he found some paper and an envelope, as well as a fountain pen before penning his gratitude.

"Melissa, help me send this letter out. This is the money for the stamps." Klein placed the sealed envelope and more than enough money for the stamps on his sister's desk.

Melissa took a glance and curled her lips.

"Klein, stamps don't cost that much."

"Yes, stamps don't, but a girl should have some allowance." Klein replied with a smile. "I believe Selena has mentioned this to you before."

Noticing that Melissa was about to protest, he quickly added, "It can be used to buy the materials and tools you need."

"Tools…" Melissa repeated softly again and again before casting her gaze back onto her books. "Alright," she said as she nodded imperceptibly.

The corners of Klein's mouth immediately curved upwards as he briskly walked back to the sofa.

"Excellent persuasion skills. You precisely pinpointed Melissa's weakness." Benson gave a thumbs up as he said with a suppressed laugh. Klein cleared his throat and said in all seriousness.

"Then how shall I persuade you? Your self-study should emphasize language and ancient literature. Of course, basic mathematics and logic are equally important."

According to the curriculum of the public schools and grammar schools, as well as the material tested for in college admissions, Klein was very confident about the general direction in which the upcoming 'civil servant examinations' would focus on.

Benson touched his hairline and said with a self-deprecating smile, "I feel like a curly-haired baboon in front of those books."

"But they're really useful," Klein said with a determined smile.

At that moment, Melissa put down her fountain pen, stood up, and walked to the sofa.

"Benson, Klein. This Sunday is Selena's birthday. She and her parents wish to invite all of us to their place for a banquet. Are both of you free?"

"Should be fine for me," Klein said after some thought.

He could take the opportunity to be acquainted with his sister's friends. It could prevent him from being utterly clueless whenever something happened to her.

"Me too," Benson said as he combed his hairs with his fingers. "It looks like we'll have to think of a birthday present for Miss Selena."

Klein smiled.

"This should be left to Melissa. She knows Miss Selena better than us. Besides, what we need to do is what a gentleman ought to do—pay for it."

"This is the first time I've heard someone describe laziness in such a pleasant manner," Benson said as he shook his head and chuckled.

Klein returned with a smile.

"This is the purpose of language and ancient literature."

"…” Benson never expected Klein to return to the subject at hand; it left him momentary speechless.

…

The next day, Klein wore his cheap formal suit and held his black inlaid silver cane as he climbed up the stairs and arrived at the Blackthorn Security Company's entrance. His tuxedo had already been sent to the tailors.

Klein was just about to greet Rozanne when he saw Captain Dunn walk out of the partition.

"Good morning Klein. Did you have a good night's sleep?" Dunn asked with concern.

Klein answered honestly, "Better than I expected. I didn't even have nightmares. But I still feel heavy and a little disgusted when I recall it."

"Very good. I feel assured hearing that," Dunn said with a nodding smile.

After chatting about the weather, he raised a matter.

"The Holy Cathedral has replied to my telegram. Aiur, Lorotta, and company are to immediately escort Sealed Artifact 2-049 and the Antigonus family's notebook back to Backlund. They've also sent an additional Nighthawk yesterday afternoon via steam locomotive to help."

"I believe that they've already set off by now."

Already set off by now? Does that mean I'm completely free from the traumatizing Antigonus family's notebook? Klein was taken aback. He found it surreal as though he was dreaming.

This is more relaxing than I imagined…

It's unlikely that there will be any follow up, right?

"May the Goddess bless them and that they will have a smooth journey." After a few seconds of silence, Klein made a gesture on his chest in the sign of the crimson moon.

Dunn wore his hat and pointed out the door.

"I have to patrol the Raphael Cemetery. Heh, I forgot one thing. The investigations of Leonard and the police department has borne fruit. They found the carriage driver that drove them. We have confirmed their temporary residence in Tingen City, but they are rather cautious. They didn't leave behind any valuable clues."

"As expected of an ancient secret organization," Klein echoed wistfully.

Dunn nodded and turned to head to the door.

He stopped three seconds later and turned his head.

"Also, the Holy Cathedral needs another two to three days before they notify us of your application to become an official member. Heh heh, this is dealt with by a different department, separate from the one that deals with the Antigonus family's notebook. They have different levels of efficiency."

"I understand," Klein replied sincerely.

Meanwhile, he helped his captain add inwardly.

Remember to submit the compensation application today!

Watching Dunn leave, Klein heard the brown-haired Rozanne exclaim.

"Goddess! Klein, are you becoming a formal member? You haven't even joined us for a month!"

Klein smiled.

"After I consumed the Seer potion, it was only a matter of time."

"That's reasonable…" Rozanne fell into a daze for a few seconds before suddenly sighing. "I was praying that you finished your mysticism lessons so that you could be added to the roster for watching the armory, but… Goddess, I have to be on duty every two days. I'm not a Sleepless! My skin, my state of mind. Goddess, save me!"

"Shouldn't you be very familiar to such a lifestyle? Before I joined, it has always been you, Bredt, and Old Neil who took turns, right?" Klein asked, puzzled.

Rozanne shook her head with a depressed look.

"No, there were four previously, five even earlier. Unfortunately, Kenley chose to become a Sleepless. Viola did not choose to extend her contract last month and joined the Khoy Noel Machinery Company. She's a gifted girl when it comes to creation. She only lacked the opportunity and money. Five years as a civilian staff allowed her to have enough savings."

Having said this, Rozanne suddenly glanced at Klein and laughed with her mouth covered.

"I've thought of a good solution. Klein, get married as soon as possible. Then, accidentally expose the secret of Beyonders to her. This is considered a very minor leak so there won't be any particularly heavy penalties. After all, who can lie to a person who shares the same bed with you over prolonged periods of time. You can introduce her to us when that happens make her a civilian staff member! What a perfect plan!"

The corners of Klein's mouth twitched.

"Miss Rozanne, you can also quickly find a husband. It should be even easier. I believe you have the adequate means to divulge the secret to him."

Rozanne's eyes widened and her mouth turned agape when she heard him.

"How can I? Marriage is a very serious matter. I have to carefully pick and observe him over a period of time to ensure that he's alright."

That's not what you said a second ago… Klein didn't bother engaging in sophistry with Rozanne. He smiled as he engaged in a little small talk before bidding farewell and heading underground.

At the armory, he saw Old Neil wrestling with the handground coffee. So, he sat down and waited patiently.

"Soon you'll be an official member, right?" Old Neil asked casually as he filtered the coffee.

"Captain said that another two to three days are needed. It's still a question of whether the Holy Cathedral will approve of it," Klein said frankly.

"Hehe." Old Neil chortled. "The Holy Cathedral won't deny cases like these, especially when you're already a Beyonder."

With that said, he turned his head and faced Klein. He said with a chuckle, "You must be mentally prepared. There's a ritual every official Nighthawk member has to undergo. They have to complete a mission independently. Of course, Dunn would definitely choose the easiest and simplest ones for a rookie. Besides, you're a support-type Seer."

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CHAPTER 81
FINALLY MEETING

"I have to complete a mission independently in order to become an official member?" Klein was taken aback. "But we might not even have a mission this week, and it might not be so simple."

Wouldn't this mean that it'll take me one to two months to become a official Nighthawk? Only then will I get a pay rise…

Old Neil sniffed at the coffee and shot a glance at him.

"It's only a ritual among Nighthawks. After all, we stand at the peak of Beyonder danger and don't want our teammates to act like children who require constant care. This won't affect the salary that you'll receive as an official member, or your privileges needed to fulfill your duty."

So it's just a ritual to gain the recognition of the other Nighthawks… But, Mr. Neil, why did you emphasize that it would not affect my pay grade as an official member… Did I make it that obvious? Klein touched his face and gave an embarrassed smile before asking, "Does it have to be a mission of the Beyonder variety?"

"That should be the case, but your performance yesterday was truly outstanding. You ingeniously killed a Beyonder that's at least at Sequence 8. I believe Frye, Royale, and the rest have already acknowledged you. Therefore, Dunn might just assign you to an ordinary mission," Old Neil said before suddenly sighing. "You'll have your salary increase several-fold. I'll never encounter something like that again in my lifetime."

Klein chuckled as he raised the matter about his Sequence pathway.

"Mr. Neil, do you think that the corresponding Sequence 8 of Seer is Clown?"

In fact, thinking back to the description from the confidential documents, it did seem to add up.

A job good at fighting with artifice…

"I can't give you any guarantees, but I think it's highly likely. Firstly, it matches up with what's said on the documents. Their agile movement and deception based battle style are key points. Next, other Sequence pathways have similar situations. Do you know the corresponding Sequence 8 for Mystery Pryer?" Old Neil asked with a chuckle.

"No, it's not written in the information provided by the Church." Klein shook his head honestly.

Old Neil chuckled briefly before saying, "I'm close friends with two old guys from the Machinery Hivemind. They mentioned it in passing, as a joke. The corresponding Sequence 8 potion of Mystery Pryer is Melee Scholar. Did you hear that? Melee Scholar. Goddess, I don't like melee combat at all. This doesn't suit the image of a Mystery Pryer at all!"

"I can understand… Mystery Pryer's pursue the mysteries behind things. Melee combat is one of those mysteries," Klein said after some thought.

Old Neil finished his handground coffee. "Alright, let's not waste time. Let's continue our mysticism studies. You still have a lot of ritualist magic that you need to grasp. You also need to learn how to create amulets and charms."

"Alright." Klein sat down and planned out his schedule for the day.

In the morning I'll study mysticism and read through all sorts of historical records. I'll submit the compensation request. After lunch, I'll practice at the Shooting Club. Then, I'll head to the Deweyville Library at Golden Indus

Borough and see if I can borrow the corresponding monograph and journal regarding the Hornacis main peak. After doing all that, if I have time, I'll spend some time at the Divination Club. I can't slack off on my "acting."

Once the compensation request is approved and I receive the money, I'll be able to buy a new suit on the way home.

Yes… I'll apply for the materials tomorrow morning and try to make a protective amulet to ward off danger for Melissa and Benson.

…

In a dining hall adorned with a chandelier and elegant decorations.

A few friends were congratulating Joyce Meyer on his escape from danger and his return to Tingen.

"We all read the news. Just the written description alone was enough to scare me," a man with a short stubble on his chin said wistfully. "Joyce, I can't believe you went through such an ordeal. Cheers. The tragedy is over now, and the sunlight shines down upon us. Exalted is the Steam."

Joyce and his fiancée, Anna, raised their cups and clinked them together with their friends. Then, they gulped down what little champagne they had left.

"Anna was extremely worried at the time. I suspect that she cried every night. Whenever I invited her for some afternoon tea, she was always absent minded. Thankfully, you're finally back now. Otherwise, I reckon she would've passed away just like that," a young lady, with a cute small nose and coiled brown hair, said to Joyce as she glanced at Anna.

"If Anna were to experience something like that, I'd be the same. I might be in an even worse state." The aquiline-nosed Joyce gave his fiancée, who was sitting beside him, a gentle look.

Anna wasn't used to expressing her emotions in front of others. She looked at the opposite end of the table and said, "Bogda, why have you been keeping your head down this entire time? I can sense how terrible your mood is."

The young lady with a petite nose answered in Bogda's place.

"Bogda is sick. The physician told him that there's something seriously wrong with his liver. He can only use medicine to reduce the pain but it doesn't treat his illness. He needs to undergo surgery."

"Lord, when did this happen?" Anna and Joyce asked in surprise and concern.

Bogda was a young man with short hair, but his face was sallow. His usually brilliant red eyes were replaced with a dim glow.

"It happened last week. Since Joyce wasn't back yet, I told Irene not to tell you," Bogda explained with a rueful smile.

Joyce asked staidly, "Have you decided when you'll undergo surgery?"

Bogda's expression changed a few times as he said, "No, I haven't decided yet. As you know, those surgeons are practically butchers. The patient is like a piece of meat on a chopping block, allowing them to butcher people as they please! I've read a lot of reports. They'll even use an ax for amputation! Lord, I suspect I might very well die on the operating table."

"But if you delay it further then surgery might not be able to save you," the man with a stubble said as he tried to persuade him.

At that moment, Anna interjected, "Bogda, perhaps you can consider doing a divination. If the divination indicates that everything will go smoothly, then proceed with the surgery as soon as possible. If the outcome of the divination is bad, seek other means. Seek it with the help of the fortune-

teller. I know of a real, mysterious fortune-teller. No, I should address him as a Seer. I believe he can definitely help you."

"For real?" Bogda returned with a question, clearly looking doubtful. Their other friends shared the same attitude.

"Yes." Anna nodded without hesitation. "I hired his divination services, and after divining Joyce's situation, he told me to return home. 'Your fiancé is at home waiting for you.' Back then, I was like all of you, filled with doubt. But when I returned home, I really saw Joyce. He was really back!"

"I can testify on this point," Joyce echoed.

He didn't mention that he had sought Klein's help in interpreting his dreams. This was because the police had informed him that Tris hadn't been caught yet. Therefore, he had to keep it a secret in order to prevent revenge from being exacted upon him.

"Lord, this is absolutely unbelievable!"

"Is divination really that magical?"

…

Amidst the shouting, Bogda thought deeply for a moment before saying, "Perhaps I should get a divination. Anna, Joyce, could you tell me the Seer's name and address?"

Anna heaved a sigh of relief and said, "You made a very wise choice."

"That Seer is at the Divination Club at Howes Street.

"His name is Klein Moretti."

…

Golden Indus Borough. Deweyville Library.

Klein used the introduction note from his mentor's letter to successfully apply for a borrowing pass.

As he flipped the tiny card in his hand, he asked a few librarians, "Do you have the Research of the Hornacis Main Peak's Relics here? It was published by the Loen Publishing Firm."

A librarian immediately answered, "Please wait a moment. Let me check the records."

He turned around and looked at the drawers. He pulled open the letter that matched Hornacis and flipped through a card that was filled with single words that followed a particular order.

On careful inspection, he shook his head and said, "Sorry, Sir. We do not have this book in our collection."

"How regretful," Klein answered in clear disappointment.

From the looks of it, I need to write to the Loen Publishing Firm or pay a visit to the Khoy University…

Meanwhile, he sighed inwardly at how dated the management of the libraries of this world was.

You people need a computer. Unfortunately, I can't produce one… Klein made a silent, self-deprecating comment and turned to ask, "Then, do you have the journal issues of New Archeology and Archeology Summary?"

"We do," the librarian confirmed. "A gentleman just returned them."

He flipped out the corresponding card and pointed Klein in the direction of the bookshelf.

Klein went over to the bookshelf, scanned the journal issues, and pulled out the ones his mentor mentioned.

Then, he randomly found a spot by the window to sit down. Under the bright afternoon sun, he began reading the information in the library quietly.

"…Ancient relics don't solely exist on the main peak of the Hornacis mountain range. They're also spread out across the surrounding forests, valleys, and gentle slopes around the main peak…"

"…These relics are formed from lofty domes and gigantic stone columns. Honestly, they can be be described as magnificent…"

"…I'm curious as to how the original residents mine and process these rocks? Hypothetically, let's assume that they performed their mining operation on the spot without needing to send them up the mountain…"

"…There's a strange pattern where the relics become larger in size the closer you are to the mountain peak. But surprisingly, there are no ruins on the peak. According to our hypothesis, there should be palaces that don't resemble man-made buildings, divine halls used for sacrifices…"

Palaces that don't look like they were man-made… divine halls used for sacrifices… Could it be the one that I saw in my dream? While Klein ruminated, he suddenly heard footsteps approaching him from a distance.

He looked up and saw a familiar face, a face that often appeared on the papers.

He had a squarish face, thick eyebrows, a firm nose, short dark-blond hair, azure-blue eyes, and tightly-closed lips. All of these features belonged to a certain famous person from Tingen City, a philanthropist, entrepreneur, and the owner of this library—Sir Deweyville.

Beside Deweyville was the middle-aged butler who Klein had met before.

Klein watched them walk by from more than ten meters away. Out of curiosity, he raised his right hand and lightly tapped his glabella twice.

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CHAPTER 82
HERB STORE

Various colors surfaced as auras and entered Klein's eyes. He casually studied Sir Deweyville's condition.

He's very healthy; there are almost no hidden problems… His emotional state is horrendous. Amid the dullness, there's frailty… His mental state is frail? He has trouble sleeping well? But the purple aura at his head is completely fine… Klein muttered silently to himself as Sir Deweyville walked off and left the library.

Retracting his gaze, Klein pinched his forehead and sighed inwardly.

Being a tycoon sure isn't easy…

He didn't pay much attention to the matter and returned his gaze onto the journal issues in front of him.

Klein didn't find a lot of clues after reading each of them. He could only confirm a few things.

Firstly, there existed an ancient kingdom on the Hornacis mountain range, as well as its surroundings. The ancient kingdom's history dated back to at least 1500 years. Secondly, their architectural style was primarily about being grand. They left behind all sorts of murals and from those murals, it could be deduced that they believed that the Evernight would protect the loved ones of the departed. Finally, in the ruins, there were symbols that represented the Evernight everywhere, but they were clearly different from the Evernight Sacred Emblem.

"If I had a chance, no— even if I have a chance, I'll never go there!" Klein muttered with clenched teeth. He vowed not to court death.

After tidying the journal articles and returning them back to their original spots, he put on his hat, lifted his cane, and left the Deweyville library.

…

Divination Club.

Bogda looked at the beautiful lady in charge of receiving guests and said, "I'd like to have a divination."

Angelica smiled politely and said, "Do you have a preferred fortune-teller? Or would you like to flip through our introduction guide and choose the one that's most suitable for you?"

Bogda pressed the right side of his abdomen and gasped silently for breath while saying, "I wish to have Mr. Klein Moretti divine for me."

"But Mr. Moretti is not here today," Angelica answered with uncertainty.

Bogda fell silent for a moment as he paced a few steps and asked, "When will Mr. Moretti be available?"

"No one knows. He has his own matters to deal with. From what I've seen, he usually comes here on Monday afternoons," Angelica said as she pondered over the matter.

"Alright." Bogda's face darkened as he turned around, planning to leave.

"Sir, you can choose other fortune-tellers as well. For example, you can choose Mr. Hanass Vincent who is famous in Tingen City," Angelica tried her best to prevent the loss of business.

Bogda stopped in his tracks and considered it for a moment before saying, "No, I only trust Mr. Moretti. Well, can I wait here for a moment? Perhaps he might come after he's done with his matters."

"No problem," Angelica said with a warm smile.

Bogda went to the sofa and sat down. Sometimes he stroked his cane; at other times he looked out the window, clearly looking rather impatient.

Seconds turned to minutes. Just as Bogda's mind was in a mess, unsure if he should continue waiting or leave, he heard the beautiful lady exclaim in pleasant surprise, "Good afternoon, Mr. Moretti!"

Klein saw the familiar Angelica and was just about to ask why it was always her. Did she not need to rest or take any days off?

However, he immediately took into consideration that he was a Seer, so it was not appropriate for him to ask such questions. Instead, he had to use the tone of a charlatan and say something like: "How marvelous it is for fate to compel us to meet once again, Madam Angelica."

Uh, would this sound like I'm hitting on her? Klein's mind whirled as he finally replied with a smile, "Good afternoon, Madam Angelica."

"A customer wishes to hire you for a divination." Angelica pointed to Bogda who had hurriedly stood up from the sofa.

Someone actually requested for me? Klein took off his half top hat in pleasant surprise, pinching his glabella twice while doing so.

"Good afternoon, Sir…” He looked over when his voice suddenly came to a pause.

In his Spirit Vision, he saw the requester's liver looking dim. It was nearly black in color. It was making the rest of his body unbalanced as his aura was thin in various places.

Klein deliberated over his words and he said in a serious expression, "Sir, you should see a doctor and not seek a divination."

Bogda stood stunned on the spot as he immediately gave a pleasant look of surprise while muttering, "How fascinating…”

"Anna wasn't lying to me…”

…

He hurriedly looked up at Klein in earnest.

"Mr. Moretti, I've already seen a doctor and might have to undergo surgery. However, I'm frightened about the surgery. I would like to divine the outcome."

The surgery of this era is really fraught with danger… Although Emperor Roselle had given the impetus, this era still lacks most of the necessary technology… Klein didn't reject his request and nodded slightly.

"My divination fee is eight pence. Is that fine?"

"Eight pence?" Bogda exclaimed in surprise. "You're only charging eight pence?"

According to Anna's description, and the performance Mr. Moretti had just shown me, I'm willing to pay at least a pound!

Haven't you heard of small margins with large volume? Klein was embarrassed for a moment. After thinking for a few seconds, he calmly smiled and replied, "It is enough just being blessed with the ability to receive revelations from the divine and catch a glimpse of fate. Therefore, we must maintain our humility and suppress our greed. Only by doing so, can we continue being bestowed with our gifts."

"You are a true seer." Bogda held his chest and bowed, his tone filled with sincerity.

Upon receiving Bogda's praise and trust, Klein's spirituality seemed to relax. As for the description of his "principles", it also gave him some new insight.

"Miss. Angelica, is Topaz available?" He turned to the beautiful lady beside him.

Angelica heaved a sigh of relief for Bogda as she smiled sweetly.

"Yes."

After entering the divination room, Klein instructed Bogda to lock the door. Then, he sat behind the table and pinched his forehead.

"Shall we use tarot cards for the divination?" he inquired with a smile.

"Spirit Dowsing" was only suitable to determine matters related to him. As for drawing an astrolabe, it was too time consuming.

"I'll leave it up to you." Bogda had no objections.

Therefore, Klein helped him shuffle and cut the deck before laying them out in an Intis formation.

Thanks to his uniqueness as a Seer, Klein did not flip the other cards. Instead, he directly flipped the card that indicated the final result.

"A reversed Wheel of Fortune. Things will develop badly." he said solemnly as he shot a glance.

The color in Bogda's face drained instantly and his lips trembled.

"Is it hopeless?"

As Klein tried his best to think of a solution, he said, "Let me try a different divination method. Please leave your ring behind. Next, write your date of birth on this piece of paper. Then, please wait outside quietly."

Influenced by his gentle and comforting tone, Bogda calmed down and followed the instructions by writing down the information and leaving his ring behind.

As he watched Bogda leave, Klein wrote a sentence on the piece of paper.

"Outcome of Bogda Jones's surgery."

He picked up the ring and paper slip and leaned back into his seat before using a dream divination technique.

In a blurry and distorted world, he gradually found himself, only to see the gentleman collapse with an ashen expression. He was covered in white cloth as he was pushed out of the quaking operating room.

This time, Klein didn't encounter anything strange. He no longer felt the sense of being watched, so he quickly woke up. He knitted his brows tightly as he considered how he was going to inform Bogda about the outcome.

The surgery may very well lead to death… I can try the restorative ritualistic magic I learned today… but that would expose the matter of Beyonders. Besides, I have to apply for Captain's approval first… Yeah, and I might not be able to treat such a severe disease… Klein was racking his brains when he suddenly thought of something.

"Mr. Glacis's lung disease was treated by an apothecary. He said that the medicine was extremely miraculous… What was it? Right, Lawson Darkwade, 18 Vlad Street in East Borough. Lawson's Folk Herb Store!" As he tried his best to memorize the address back then, Klein quickly remembered the details.

He rapped the corners of the table and quickly made a decision.

After using Spirit Dowsing to quickly determine if it was a good or bad idea, Klein walked out the door. When he saw Bogda stand up in a fluster, he returned his ring to him and said warmly with a smile, "I found hope for you."

"Really?" Bogda asked pleasantly surprised.

Klein did not reply him as he continued talking.

"Your hope lies in the East Borough, on Vlad Street. It's related to the single term Lawson."

"If you can't find it, come back here again on Monday at four in the afternoon."

"Good. Good." Bogda nodded as he repeated himself. He excitedly fished out his wallet and produced five pence and three pennies.

He had done according to what Klein had said, without using tips to corrupt a true seer.

The corners of Klein's lips twitched as he received the money, but he smiled brilliantly.

"I hope you will find hope as soon as possible."

After Bogda left, he handed over the commission like the previous time and also gave Angelica tips, pretending as though he had collected a soli.

…

East Borough. Vlad Street.

Bogda walked from one end of the street to the other, repeating it three times until his liver started to ache.

Finally, he determined that there was only one place that had anything to do with Lawson on the street. It was the Lawson's Folk Herb Store, numbered 18 on the street.

Mustering his courage, he walked in and caught the smell of the various herbs. He saw that the owner of the shop had black but very short hair. His face was round and he looked to be in his thirties or forties.

The boss's formal attire resembled that of a village witchdoctor. It was a deep black robe embroidered with all kinds of strange symbols.

"Hello, do you have medicine that can treat my disease?" Bogda asked politely.

The boss raised his head and swept his deep blue eyes across Bogda and smiled.

"Your liver disease is very serious, but the premise of everything is whether you have the money. Do you have enough to pay for the medicine?"

He can tell? Bogda suddenly felt a lot more confident as he nodded frantically.

"How much is your medicine?"

"Ten pounds. It's a very fair price." The boss fished out a bag of herbs from under the counter and said, "Add sufficient water and boil it into medicine. After boiling it, add ten drops of fresh rooster blood, then drink it down immediately. This bag of herbs can be cooked thrice. You will be fine after three times."

As he spoke, he opened the yellowish-brown paper and threw in all sorts of strange herbs.

It sounds extremely shady… Bogda gulped down his saliva and said, "That's it?"

The boss stared at him and immediately smiled.

"Do you still want something else? What about this bag? Once you recover from your liver disease, I can give you a guarantee that your wife will be very satisfied."

He chuckled as he took out a black-papered bag of herbs and suppressed his voice.

"There's mummy powder inside… Trust me, a lot of aristocrats consume this stuff. They put it in their tea or boil it as soup."

…Bogda's confidence in the boss wavered to the point of feeling disgusted.

I believe in Mr. Moretti… He took a deep breath, fished out his wallet, and pulled out the two biggest notes from what little was left of his gold pounds.

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CHAPTER 83
CARVING

Holding onto the yellowish-brown paper bag full of herbs, Bogda staggered out of the Lawson's Folk Herb Store.

While waiting for a tracked carriage, he suddenly came to a realization.

He had spent ten pounds to buy a bag of stuff?

This was nearly a month's salary for him!

If it wasn't for his trust in Anna and Joyce, he wouldn't have brought that much cash to the Divination Club!

Could it be that the reason why Mr. Moretti only accepted eight pence for his divination, had something to do with his collusion with the boss of Lawson's Folk Herb Store, so as to earn more? This was a classic scam written on the papers! When Bogda made this connection, he even began to suspect Klein a little. He even began suspecting Joyce and Anna.

When a tracked carriage stopped in front of him, he looked at the herbs in his hand. Unable to bring himself to return, he entered the carriage with a heavy heart.

…

Inside Lawson's Folk Herb Store.

As the boss watched Bogda leave, he suddenly turned his head and shouted at the door where there was a pile of herbs, "Scharmaine, stop purchasing

herbs from today."

"W-why, Master?" A handsome-looking youth with disheveled hair walked out.

The boss smiled and said, "This is the sixteenth customer that has come because of my fame. If this carries on, I believe the Nighthawks, the Machinery Hivemind, and the Mandated Punishers will notice me. When the time comes, I'll need to consider heading to other cities."

"Then, do we need to sublease this store?" Scharmaine nodded in understanding as he asked with concern.

The boss chuckled.

"If you wish to stay, you can be the boss of this store. You are already capable at identifying herbs and concocting medicine. Of course, remember to deposit half of your monthly profits into my anonymous Backlund Bank account."

"But, I haven't learned what you are really good at." Scharmaine was already sick of never staying in a city for more than a year, but he was unwilling to give up learning the magical formulas that his master was good at.

The boss leisurely rocked himself in his seat.

"That's not something you can learn just because you want to…”

…

A blackish-green bubbling liquid appeared in front of Bogda's eyes. It smelled of stinking socks and the color that makes one want to puke made him deeply suspicious about everything he had done today.

When the rooster blood was dropped into the medicine, Bogda's father looked at his son worriedly and said, "I think surgery is the best option."

The few drops of rooster blood bubbled with the boiling liquid before vanishing. Bogda took a deep breath and said, "If this medicine is useless, I'll consider surgery."

"The Lord will watch over you." Bogda's father gestured a triangular Sacred Emblem across his chest.

By the time the boiling liquid had cooled down, Bogda had no intention of wasting the ten pounds. He raised his right hand and closed his eyes. Flicking his head back, he gulped down the medicine in one go.

The pungent aroma that had the noxious smell of blood, swished around in his mouth as he nearly spat out everything he had just drank.

That night, Bogda had an upset stomach. He went to the bathroom six times, and by the time the crimson moon vanished, he fell asleep groggily.

After an unknown period of time had passed, he jolted awake, having dreamed that he was being reprimanded by his boss at work.

"Thankfully, I took three days of annual leave. I don't have to rush to work." Bogda heaved a sigh of relief when he discovered that he felt a lot more spirited.

This was in stark contrast to the sluggish state he was in for the past few weeks.

Bogda subconsciously reached out and pressed the right side of his abdomen. He noticed that the region which previously hurt when under slight pressure felt normal. He only felt the pain from ordinary pressure.

"Don't tell me it was really effective? That apothecary was clearly just fooling me…" Bogda was both surprised and doubtful as he got out of bed.

He stretched himself and felt his health returning to him.

He fell silent for a very long while as he muttered, "According to the apothecary, I still need to drink it twice. Once I'm done drinking, I'll go to the hospital to get a check up from a doctor…

"That apothecary didn't tell me how many times I can drink a day…

"…I still think he's a cheat…"

…

Inside the civilian staff office of the Blackthorn Security Company, from his prior request, Klein received a space where no one would disturb him.

He held a carving knife and emitted his spirituality. He seriously carved the incantations and symbols onto two silver accessories.

The incantation was a request to avoid disaster and was written in Hermes. The two mysticism symbols symbolized the Evernight Goddess as well as the Empress of Disaster and Horror.

Aside from that, Klein also added the Path Number that corresponded to the Goddess, 7, and the magical characteristic.

In addition to that, charms and amulets had to be engraved on both sides; and each side's symbols, incantations, and characteristics, their exact locations, or special formats was in the realm of mysticism. The ones that were spread amongst the ordinary populace were filled with mistakes.

At that moment, Klein had a lot of damaged materials to his right. Through repeated practise, and only after he confirmed that he had enough practice, did he dare to begin creating the amulets for Benson and Melissa.

As he calmed his mind, his spirituality spewed out from the tip of the carving knife. The number 7 appeared on the surface of the silver

accessories.

He had already finished carving the incantations and symbols on the other side of the accessory. All that was left was to finish the remaining side.

After putting down his knife, all his spirituality chained together as Klein suddenly felt a strange, majestic, and terrifying energy surge throughout the room.

The commotion quickly vanished as the incantations on both sides of the accessory became complete with Klein's Spirit Vision. It emitted a serene blackness.

He put down his carving knife and gently polished the silver accessory that was formed from a circle and a vertical piece. He felt a tinge of coolness from the mild-to-the-touch surface.

"It's done!" He happily placed the finished amulet and another one that he had previously finished into his pocket, planning to find an opportunity to give it to Benson and Melissa.

Amulets created by Beyonders possessed a certain level of effectiveness. They allowed the wearer to unknowingly avoid disasters to a certain extent, but it was nothing too ridiculous. Furthermore, their spirituality would wane bit by bit. Unless one used a high-level ritualistic magic and created a prayer set, a year was the maximum one could use them for. As for high-level ritualistic magic, there was a terrifyingly high spirituality requirement. It wasn't something Klein could endure at the moment.

When the time comes, I can use my spirituality to make another one… Klein thought, nodding as he began tidying up the messy table.

He didn't make one for himself for the moment, because an amulet of that level had limited effects on him. Therefore, his goal was to gain a deeper understanding of incantations before trying to pair it with ritualistic magic.

That way he could create a few defensive amulets that could be activated specifically with sound.

After everything was finished, Klein walked out the office and prepared to hand over the damaged materials. That was when he saw Captain Dunn walk over in his black windbreaker.

Dunn's deep and gray eyes swept across him as he smiled.

"Klein, the Holy Cathedral has approved it. You're now an official member."

"Really? That's great!" Klein expressed his delight.

Dunn nodded and said with a smile, "You can now receive a make-up pay of three pounds for this week. You'll receive 4.50 pounds every subsequent week until the advance payment is cleared.

"By the way, did I mention the Nighthawks' ritual?

"Every official Nighthawk has to independently complete a mission. Only by doing so will you gain the recognition of your partners. In consideration of the outstanding performance you showed, I believe I can assign you an ordinary mission instead. When that happens, I'll formally introduce you to all the Nighthawks in Tingen City."

Klein replied without hesitation, "Alright!"

Three pounds plus his compensation of seven pounds. Getting a new suit wasn't a problem anymore!

Furthermore, he would still have plenty left over!

Well, who knows when my mission will arrive…

Klein waited all the way till Sunday, the day of Selena's birthday banquet.

…

Changing into his formal suit and using a brush and handkerchief to tidy his half top hat, Klein looked himself in the mirror before walking over to the first floor in satisfaction.

At that moment, Melissa was sizing up Benson's clothes.

"Is there a problem?" Benson raised his cane, feeling a little lacking due to his sister's gaze.

He felt that there was nothing wrong with him when he inspected himself. He was already dressed quite decently.

Melissa stopped staring at him and said with a serious expression, "Benson, that is a very old suit you're wearing."

"There will be a lot of excellent ladies and madams participating in today's birthday banquet. I believe that by wearing that, it'll be a form of disrespect to them."

Klein was originally filled with questions. However, when he heard Melissa's emphasis, he immediately realized what was happening. He went over with a chuckle and said, "Benson and I share a similar build. He can wear my other tuxedo."

He had already informed his siblings about buying a new suit. He explained it away by saying that his clothes had been torn while inspecting certain objects. Therefore, the company generously compensated him. Of course, he concealed the matter of him being "promoted with a pay rise." He was afraid of scaring them and only planned to tell them after half a year.

Such an explanation made Benson and Melissa extremely envious. They felt that the Blackthorn Security Company was an impeccable employer.

"There's no need to, right?" Benson retorted, having not realized the gravity of the situation.

"No, it's extremely important." Klein pushed Benson's shoulders up the stairs. "My tuxedo is hanging on the clothes rack."

After watching Benson go up the stairs in a daze, Klein turned around and smiled at Melissa.

"Are you hoping that Benson will use the opportunity provided by Selena's birthday banquet to begin a beautiful new romance?"

He had been reading quite a fair amount of newspapers and magazines recently. He knew that aristocrats and middle-class banquets were typically grounds for blind dates.

Melissa nodded solemnly.

"Yes, Benson has missed out too much because of us."

Sis, why are you like a mother… Klein looked at Melissa as he suddenly shook his head with an exasperated laugh.

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CHAPTER 84
ELIZABETH

Seeing the unconvinced look his sister's face, Klein suddenly felt like it was a good opportunity. He sized her up and said with a solemn expression, "Melissa, I think you aren't showing enough respect to today's banquet as well."

"What?" Melissa wore a puzzled look.

Klein pointed at her neck.

"As a lady, you are lacking a necklace that accentuates that area."

Without waiting for his sister to say another word, he smiled as he fished out a silver amulet wrapped with angel wings from his pocket.

"Thankfully, I prepared one for you."

"…” Melissa was taken aback at first before she asked, "How much was it?"

Sis, your concerns are really quite misplaced… Klein silently scoffed as he explained with a chuckle, "It's actually not very expensive. Since it was in an incomplete state, I imitated an item that I've seen before and engraved blessing incantations and beautiful patterns on them."

"You engraved them?" Melissa was indeed distracted.

"How is it? What do you think of my work?" Klein took the opportunity to hand over the amulet to his sister.

Melissa studied it before gently biting down on her lip.

"I like the surrounding angel feathers."

If you think the incantations and symbols I engraved are ugly then just say so. There's no need to mince your words… An amulet's value is in its effects! The corner of Klein's mouth twitched. Just as he was about to urge his sister to accept it, he saw Melissa put on the necklace with a forced expression on her face. She then carefully adjusted the positioning of the amulet.

"Perfect." Klein sized her up and gave her exaggerated praise.

Melissa shot him a glance and looked down at her amulet. She said listlessly, "Klein, you were never like that before. Acting like that…"

"Perhaps it's because of my good job. With a decent income, I've become more confident." Klein interrupted his sister and gave a preemptive explanation.

Sigh, even though I received the original Klein's memory fragments, making myself appear natural in most major aspects, certain fine details are still there. I'm still used to presenting my real personality… Especially when I'm getting closer and more familiar with Benson and Melissa… He sighed inwardly.

Melissa seemed to accept his explanation and pouted her lips.

"It's great that you're like that… really great…"

After the two engaged in a short conversation, Benson came down having changed his clothes. He wore a white shirt with a black vested tuxedo. His black bowtie and a pair of long, straight trousers made it seem like he had undergone a complete makeover. It was like he was a successful businessman after years of hard work.

Same for the receding hairline… Klein chuckled inwardly.

"Excellent, Benson. It suits you very well," he said with a brilliant smile while throwing up his hands.

Melissa also nodded in agreement on the sideline.

"The facts show that my clothing is more important than me." Benson gave a self-derisive comment.

Klein took the opportunity to fish out the remaining amulet and repeated his explanation from earlier before saying, "I also made one for you."

"Not bad. I'll bring it with me." Benson accepted it without a fuss as he quipped, "Klein, I wouldn't find it odd, even if you were to suddenly know how to style your hair, make clothes, fix watches, and feed curly-haired baboons."

"Life is just so full of surprises," Klein replied with a smile.

Following that, the siblings tidied themselves up before walking out the main door. They took a trackless public carriage and arrived at the North Borough's Fania Street where Selena's house was.

The Wood family lived in a terrace house as well, but unlike Klein's place, they had a porch. They had a small lawn in the front which made it look very elegant.

When they rung the doorbell, Klein, Benson, and Melissa only had to wait for around ten seconds before they were able to see the star of the day, Selena Wood.

With a head covered in wine-red hair, the girl gave Melissa a delighted hug.

"I like this dress of yours. It makes you look exceptionally beautiful."

Standing beside Selena Wood was her father, Mr. Wood, senior employee of Backlund Bank's Tingen branch.

"Welcome, our honorable elder brother. Welcome, our young historian." He deliberately addressed Benson and Klein in an exaggerated manner.

Young historian… Why doesn't he add the description of me having a conscience?… Klein retorted as he took off his hat and replied with a smile, "Mr. Wood, you look much more spirited and younger than I imagined."

His style of flattery had unknowingly inclined himself to the Foodaholic Empire.

Benson held out his hand and shook Wood's hand.

"I know a lot of bank employees, but they're all equally arrogant and stiff, as though they're the latest machines. None of them are as civilized as you."

"If you were to meet me at the bank, you might not say that about me." Wood laughed cheerfully.

After exchanging pleasantries, Selena, who was wearing a new dress, led the siblings inside with a hop in her step. At times, she would mention in her usual tone that, "Elizabeth is already here," and at other times, she would suppress her voice saying, "Melissa, your brothers are more handsome than I imagined."

Hey, I have good hearing… Although you are flattering me… Klein helplessly looked at the two sixteen-year-old girls walking ahead of him.

This isn't right. I'm still quite far from being considered handsome… Tsk, Miss Selena, how ugly did you imagine Benson and I to be? A balding, gloomy, fat man with a pale expression and lifeless eyes? Klein pinched his glabella in passing as he diligently practiced his Spirit Vision.

Miss Selena Wood is healthy. She's excited and very happy… Mr. Wood's lungs are a little problematic. Right, I see his pipe… Klein swept his gaze across the crowd while in a good mood.

"Elizabeth, Melissa is here." At that moment, Selena introduced with a brisk tone.

A girl dressed in a blue frilly dress walked over. She had naturally curled brown hair and adorable baby fat.

Klein was stunned when he saw her because he knew the girl.

He had helped her choose an amulet back at the underground market!

Elizabeth greeted Melissa first before looking at Benson and Klein.

She was stunned and her brows knitted slightly, as though she was thinking about something.

Soon, Elizabeth smiled and politely greeted them as though nothing had happened.

Klein also pretended not to recognize her. Under Wood's lead, they came to the sofa in the living room where they were introduced to Chris—Selena Wood's brother—and the other guests.

As Klein watched Benson chat with Chris and the other solicitors happily over the topic of their neighbor, Mr. Shaud, he couldn't help but feel envious.

I don't have such socializing skills… He picked up a cocktail from a table in the corner of the room as he listened quietly. At times, he would nod and echo with a smile.

It didn't take long before all the guests arrived and the banquet officially began.

As too many guests had been invited, the Wood family's dining table could not accommodate everyone. Therefore, the banquet was done in a buffet manner. The maidservant served the steak dishes, roast chicken, fried fish, mashed potatoes, etc and placed them on different tables. The male servants were responsible for carving the meat, allowing for guests to take what they wanted.

Klein couldn't help but click his tongue when he saw the elegant enamel plates and silver cutlery. He felt that the Woods were being too extravagant as a middle-class family.

Since they're so rich, why would Chris need so many years to prepare for his wedding?" When he thought of what his sister had previously mentioned, he was puzzled. *"Yeah, it was probably to save up money to buy this cutlery that would have taken them so many years to afford. To such families, they have to look respectable!*

Amidst his mixed emotions, Klein picked up a plate and walked in front of a dining table. He forked a piece of honey-glazed roasted meat.

At that moment, Elizabeth with her adorable baby fat cheeks came over. As she looked at the food, she whispered, "So you are Melissa's brother… Thank you. Selena likes the amulet I gave her a lot. She said that she felt healthier the moment she wore it."

Selena… Amulet… Klein suddenly recalled the reason for selecting an amulet for the girl beside him.

It was to give to a friend who liked mysticism as a birthday gift!

That friend was Selena? Selena liked items related to mysticism? Klein frowned slightly as he smiled politely.

"It might just be akin to a placebo effect."

After saying that, he began waiting for her to praise Emperor Roselle.

However, Elizabeth's reaction was that of confusion.

"What's a placebo effect?"

"It means it's completely psychological. At times, we believe that we will turn for the better and end up really becoming better," Klein explained crudely.

"No, she said it's different from the amulets that she bought in the past. It feels different," Elizabeth emphasized.

She cocked her head and shot a glance at Klein and said curiously, "I never expected Melissa's brother to be an expert at mysticism."

"As you know, I studied history, so it's common to encounter similar matters." Klein diverted the topic skillfully as he asked, "Are you also studying at the Tingen Technical School?"

"No, Selena and I were Melissa's former schoolmates. Later, she went to a technical school. I study at the nearby Ivos Public School," Elizabeth explained seriously.

A public school wasn't established and maintained by the government. Instead, it was a school that accepted students from the public. It was an evolution of good grammar schools whose goal was to groom graduates so as to enter university. The schools were rather expensive and they would consider the students' family background. It could even be out the of range of typical middle-class families.

She didn't talk much. After choosing her food, she returned to Selena's side.

After congratulating the star of the day on a happy birthday, the banquet gradually came to an end. Klein and Benson were invited to a game of Texas hold'em. The small blind was half a penny, and the big blind was a penny. As for Melissa, Elizabeth, Selena, and their friends, they went upstairs. It was unknown if they were chatting or playing games.

Klein's luck was pretty bad. He played about twenty rounds, but didn't receive a good hand at all. All he could do was fold and be a spectator.

When he flipped the ends of his cards again, he found a Two of Hearts and a Five of Spades.

"Shall I try a bluff once?" Klein considered for a moment, but did not manage to muster the courage. He also resisted the urge to use divination to cheat.

He covered his cards and rapped the table, indicating that he was not making a call. Then, he got up and left the table to head for the bathroom.

Roselle was also a person with a obsessive-compulsive disorder. He actually found an odd reason to name the play style Texas… Klein shook his head as he proceeded forward.

At that moment, he suddenly came to a halt as his pupils constricted.

His spiritual perception told him that there was a strange fluctuation upstairs!

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CHAPTER 85
URGENCY

The strange, twisted, and obscure fluctuation was short-lived. Shortly afterwards, Klein even suspected that he was hallucinating.

If he wasn't considered rather skilled at spiritual perception, it was very likely that he would've written off the abnormality.

Klein frowned as he thought of his sister upstairs. He tightly held onto his cane as he went around the bathroom and hobbled to the Wood household's staircase.

He quickly went upstairs while following the traces with his spiritual perception before arriving at the living room beside the balcony.

This should be it… Klein mumbled as he raised his hand and tapped twice on his glabella.

Auras penetrated the walls and the large wooden door before entering his vision. Most of the colors were ordinary with a blurry outline.

However, one of them in particular was rippling with a sinister dark green color over its surface that slowly corroded inwards.

Just as I thought, something wasn't right. Klein wore an usually stern expression as he reached out with his right hand and removed the silver chain which was wrapped around his left wrist.

He held the silver chain in his left hand, allowing the topaz to dangle before him.

When the topaz stopped swinging, he traced the spherical light and chanted inwardly, "The room before me has danger caused by the supernatural."

Normally, spirit dowsing was only suitable for divining something that was related to him or the specific circumstances in a small region around him. As such, Klein described the chant in very specific manner—the 'danger' could affect him and the room was right in front of him.

…

"The room before me has danger caused by the supernatural."

After repeating the chant seven times, Klein eyes widened as he saw the topaz rotating in a clockwise motion rapidly.

It was an indication that there was indeed danger caused by the supernatural inside the room, and it was of considerable danger!

Selena is a mysticism enthusiast. Did something go extremely wrong when she was dabbling with some sort of ritual? What should I do? Klein massaged his brows and wrapped the chain around his wrist before knocking on the door.

Thump! Thump! Thump!

He knocked on the door three times rhythmically and wore an amiable smile on his face.

The door opened with a creak. Melissa, who was wearing her new dress, appeared in front of Klein.

"Klein, is something wrong?" The girl didn't expect her brother to be here, so she was momentarily surprised.

Klein responded with a smile, without any sign of distress.

"I was just curious since I heard you gals enjoying yourselves."

"Sorry for disturbing all of you." Melissa lowered her head in apology, feeling somewhat embarrassed. "We're playing with magic mirror divination. Selena knows a lot and it's very fun."

Magic mirror divination… Sis, why don't you gals play Charlie Charlie challenge [1] or Ouija boards [2] *?* Klein shook his head, feeling both peeved and amused.

He looked behind Melissa and into the living room. He saw Selena with her beaming smile and deep dimples.

However, in his Spirit Vision, the wine-red haired girl, who was holding a silver-coated mirror, was being encroached by the sinister dark green colors.

As his mind whirled, Klein deliberated over his words and said, "Heh heh, I won't be interrupting your game. Ah, right. Where's Elizabeth? I had chatted with her over Feysac grammar. She mentioned that she wanted to ask me some questions."

"Elizabeth?" Melissa sized her brother up and said in an eccentric tone to emphasize her words. "She's only 16."

Hey, don't let your imagination go wild! Klein immediately explained, "It's a very normal academic discussion. Elizabeth is very interested in history and ancient languages."

Melissa took a deep look at her brother before saying, "She's inside. I'll inform her."

"Alright." Klein took a step back and moved away from the door.

While watching his sister turn around, he heaved a sigh of relief. Although it wasn't the best of reactions, he was thankful that the person in a danger wasn't Melissa.

He only waited for about ten seconds before a puzzled Elizabeth walked out. She asked curiously, "Mr. Moretti, what's the matter? I never said I was interested in history and ancient languages…”

At that moment, her sentence was halted by Klein's stern and solemn expression. Her nerves tightened as she seemed to sense that something wasn't right.

Klein took a few steps diagonally as a gesture for Elizabeth to hide partially behind the door.

The girl with the chubby baby fat was influenced by the sudden serious atmosphere so she unknowingly followed.

"As you know, I'm a mysticism enthusiast." Klein halted and turned around, speaking directly to the point.

Elizabeth nodded and replied, "Yes, I even believe that you're an expert at mysticism."

"No, I'm only an enthusiast, but this doesn't stop me from noticing that your magic mirror divination has turned into a problem," Klein said with a heavy tone.

"A problem?" Elizabeth nearly raised her voice as she hurriedly raised her hands to cover her mouth.

Klein thought for a moment before saying, "I know words alone will make it difficult for you to believe me. Return to the room and when Selena isn't paying attention, steal a glance at the front of the mirror which Selena has hidden away from all of you."

"How do you know that she hid the front of the mirror from us?" Elizabeth blurted out.

According to the information from the Nighthawks, more than ninety percent of the time, magic mirror divination cases which involve evil share such similarities… Klein smiled and said, "General knowledge."

When the doubtful and frightened Elizabeth returned to the room, his composed smile vanished instantly. His face looked worried.

Even though we're all in the North Borough, to go from Fania Street to Zouteland Street will take at least 15 minutes of travel by public carriage. By the time Captain arrives after making a round trip, the situation might have deteriorated to a hopeless state… If only Benson and Melissa wasn't here… But I can't deal with those hidden and unknown existences… Do I have any means to contain it… Right, Selena is a mysticism enthusiast. Her room definitely has no lack of extracts, essential oils, herbs, and other items…

Just as Klein was racking his brains for a solution, Elizabeth sat next to Selena by using an excuse of discussing something with her.

A girl opposite her sipped a mouthful of red wine, and under the teasing looks of everyone, despite her blushing, she mustered her courage to ask, "Can you help me divine when I'll meet a romantic and handsome gentleman?"

Selena lightly coughed twice as she rubbed the mirror's back and said, "Mirror, mirror, tell me. When will the gentleman in Yonina's heart appear?"

After repeating it three times, she picked up the mirror and raised it in front of her.

Seizing this opportunity, Elizabeth suddenly turned her body and stretched out her head to take a glance.

According to her expectations, she felt that she would see Selena's face and half her face.

However, the only thing she saw was Selena.

The tiny mirror only had Selena, and it was Selena's entire body!

The mirror was completely pitch-black, with Selena standing in the middle with a cold expression!

Elizabeth trembled all over as she lunged backward and leaned against the sofa. She momentarily forgot to breathe.

She involuntarily trembled and without giving an excuse, got up immediately, stumbling to the door. She didn't even dare to turn back to look at the beaming Selena.

"Yonina's gentleman will appear on the Sunday of the second week, half a year later…”

Amidst giggles, Elizabeth opened the door and left the room to see Klein who was standing in the shadows of the wall lamps in his tuxedo and half top hat.

"Mr. Moretti, I-I…” she stammered in a daze.

Klein calmly smiled.

"Don't disturb the girls and ladies inside."

Infected by his smile, Elizabeth calmed down significantly. She extended her hand and closed the door as she quickly walked over to the wall lamp.

"I saw it. I saw only Selena inside the mirror. A devil-like Selena…” she whispered hoarsely.

Indeed… Klein's expression turned serious as he asked in a deep voice.

"Do you know which is Selena's bedroom? Do you know where her mysticism items are?"

"There. The mysticism items are in there as well." Elizabeth didn't hesitate to point at a room diagonally across.

Klein held his cane and walked over, opening the unlocked wooden door. Under the streetlights and the crimson moon's illumination, he turned a valve and lit a gas lamp.

A pale yellow light glowed as he swept the area and found bottles of extracts, flower essence, boxes of herbal powder, candles and amulets.

These items were placed on tables or neatly arranged inside a rack. Their names were given on sticker labels.

After confirming the items, Klein said to Elizabeth who had followed behind him, "Do you want to save Selena?"

"Yes!" Elizabeth subconsciously nodded before asking in a daze, "Will it be dangerous?"

"A certain amount. After all, I'm only a mysticism enthusiast," Klein replied frankly.

"A certain amount of danger…" Elizabeth pursed her lips tightly for a few seconds before saying, "Is there anything you need from me?"

Klein smiled warmly as he comforted her, "Don't be nervous. Now, all you have to do is pretend to return as though nothing had happened. Return to Selena's side. Five minutes later—remember—five minutes later, tell Selena that you have a pleasant surprise and bring her to me. Knock on the door softly, one long knock and two short ones. Following that, well—leave it to me."

Elizabeth thought over it silently before nodding seriously.

"Alright."

Seeing her return to the living room, Klein glanced at his pocket watch. He closed Selena's bedroom and quickly cleared the desk. Then, he picked the items needed and placed them on a chair.

Immediately following that, he picked up two faint candles with a light aroma. He placed them on the upper left and right corners of the desk.

They were symbols representing the Lady of Crimson and the Empress of Disaster and Horror.

Klein planned on holding a ritual here to borrow the Evernight Goddess's powers to ward off the mysterious and unknown existence that was affecting Selena!

As he was only a Sequence 9, the ritualistic magic he knew wasn't strong enough. In order to succeed, he needed Elizabeth to lure Selena into a sealing circle, right in the vicinity of the altar!

Therefore, he needed to consider situations in which Selena might notice and resist!

Due to these reasons, Klein planned on using suspension-style ritualistic magic.

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CHAPTER 86
PRAYER

Suspension-style ritualistic magic referred to the termination of a ritual according to the Beyonder's judgment. They could finish other matters first before returning to continue the ritual. Even by doing so, it was still possible to gain the desired effects.

This was a technique produced over 1000 years of ritualistic magic development. After all, many high-level ritualistic magic required multiple steps. The duration ranged from an hour to half a day before finishing. It was difficult to ensure that no one disturbed them during the entire process or that there wouldn't be any accidents.

After gaining lessons from various predecessors through blood and tears, gaining feedback through each failure, being able to suspend ritualistic magic became mainstream at the higher levels while it also indirectly affected the lower level rituals.

However, being able to suspend a ritual didn't mean that the ritual could be suspended at any time. One had to abide by mysticism theory and grasp the corresponding technique. If not, the failure of the ritual was unavoidable. it could even result in a terrifying backlash effect.

Based on Klein's understanding, once one gained the attention of a particular divinity, and the divinity was waiting on the contents of the request, to suddenly say, "Wait, I need to use the bathroom," one can only be congratulated since they might never need to go to the bathroom ever again.

Phew… Klein heaved a sigh of relief as he composed himself.

Even though he had held many luck-enhancement rituals and had even designed a corresponding ritual that made an attempt at Justice and The Hanged Man, this was his first actual ritualistic magic that abided by the rules.

After looking at the silver-inlaid cane by the side of the bed, Klein picked up the third candle and placed it in the middle of the desk to represent himself.

He placed the silver bowl that Selena used for rituals in front of the third candle and replaced the ax with a Sacred Emblem. On the left were the extracts and essential oils of the Moon flower, Slumber flower, and other plants. While on the right, he placed a plate of salt, a small silver dagger, a piece of fake goatskin, and a quill that was dipped in ink.

Luckily, Selena had a complete inventory; otherwise, he wouldn't have had any way to complete the preparations. As for the moderately fast rituals that Old Neil could perform, they were not something a Seer could do…

From the looks of it, Selena was quite an experienced mysticism enthusiast. Yes, if she wasn't experienced then she wouldn't have gotten into such trouble… She was only 16 and had been exposed to all of this for at least a year… Who had guided her? Ideas flashed through his mind as he picked up Selena's cup from the bed. He poured plain water into it and placed it beside the coarse salt.

He took out his pocket watch and popped it open. He didn't delay any further after taking a glance at it. He traced layers of the spherical light in his mind and quickly entered Cogitation.

The room that was filled with floral fragrance, was suddenly subject to a formless whirlwind. Klein put away his pocket watch and his eyes suddenly turned darker, from brown to black, as though he could see through one's soul.

He extended his palm and laid it against the candle on the top right corner. He chanted inwardly, "Evernight Goddess, you are the Lady of Crimson!"

As Klein chanted, he extended his spirituality and rubbed the candle wick. After a couple of moments, the candle suddenly lit up, and there was a tranquil blue inside the dim yellow light.

"Evernight Goddess, you are the Empress of Disaster and Horror!"

Just like he did before, Klein successfully lit up the second candle on the top left corner.

"I am your loyal guard; the shield that fends against danger in the dark night, and the long spear that stabs at evil in the silence!"

Whoosh!

The third candle that symbolized Klein began to burn.

The flame was still. He picked up the small silver knife and mimicked Old Neil's motions. He used incantations, coarse salt, and plain water to fulfill the purification.

Then, he let his spirituality that he had gathered spewed out from the tip of the silver dagger, and naturally merged them as one.

With the silver knife in hand, Klein walked around the bedroom—kneeling when he came to the bed—and sealed the area with a formless barrier.

The light from the street lamp outside the window suddenly disappeared, but the red light was still shining through quietly.

Klein returned to the study desk and picked up the quill. With spirituality and ink, he drew incantations and symbols to ward off disaster.

When all of that was finished, he put down the things he was holding. Then, he trickled a drop of extract, flower essence, and essential oils on each of the three candles.

Sizzle!

A faint fog filled the room which suddenly possessed an additional hint of mystery.

Next, he burned a few types of herbs before taking a step back from the mixture of fragrances and began reciting the corresponding incantation in the suspension ritualistic magic.

"Nobler than the stars and more eternal than eternity, the Evernight Goddess.

"I pray for your loving grace.

"I pray for you to show your loving grace to a devout believer of yours.

"I pray for the power of the Crimson.

"I pray for the powers of Disaster and Horror.

"I pray that you will cleanse your devout believer, Selena Wood, from evil's corruption and be safe from danger.

"I pray that you would wait for a moment, a moment for that unfortunate girl."

…

"Moon flower, a herb that belongs to the red moon, please bestow your powers to my incantation!

"Slumber flower, a herb that belongs to the red moon, please bestow your powers to my incantation!"

…

After reciting the incantation, Klein closed his eyes and repeated it seven times in his heart.

He saw that there was nothing out of the ordinary at the altar. He then lifted the silver dagger again and took a few steps back to the door of Selena's bedroom.

He tapped his chest in four spots, forming the shape of the crimson moon. He then turned around and raised his silver dagger.

His spirituality spewed out from the tip once again and sliced open the shape of a door in the formless wall.

Klein knew that even if he opened the door at that very moment, it wouldn't affect the tranquility and holiness of the altar.

He took out his silver vine-leaf pocket watch that had a intricate pattern. He checked the time and went through the process that was to happen in a few moments.

…

In the living room on the second floor.

Elizabeth's body was quivering as she lifted her head from time to time to check the wall clock. She was counting down in silence under the illumination of the two gas lamps.

"It's almost time…" As she spoke softly, she looked sideways at the lively girl with long wine-red hair. Her dimples were deep, her smile was bright, and she gossiped well with all the friends around her.

But the more everything looked normal, the more terrified Elizabeth felt. The cold and horrifying Selena in the mirror seemed to be in her head, and she couldn't wipe the image away.

I can't wait anymore! I have to take action now! Elizabeth suddenly stood up. Before everyone's shocked gazes, she smiled and stuttered, "Selena, I-I have a surprise for y-you. Follow me out for a bit."

"Really? Didn't you give me a birthday present already?" Selena flipped the mirror the other way around and stood up in surprise.

"A surprise will n-not have any signs." Elizabeth felt that she had no talent in acting at all.

Without saying another word, she walked toward the bedroom door first. Selena followed behind with a confused smile.

Melissa looked at her two best friends leaving, and unconsciously knitted her eyebrows.

Elizabeth is acting so strange today…

She started acting even stranger after she met Klein…

She suddenly ran out earlier and said that she needed to use the bathroom, but why did she look so anxious?

…

Selena's bedroom entrance.

Elizabeth took a deep breath and said to the girl in front of her, "Let's go to your room."

"Elizabeth, you seem very nervous and afraid. Why?" Selena looked puzzled at her good friend as she noticed her body trembling constantly.

"Excitement! Yes, excitement!" Elizabeth shot a glance at the mirror in Selena's hand as she turned half her body around to knock on the door with a long knock followed by two short successive ones.

"Why are you knocking on the door…" Selena was baffled even more.

Creak. Her bedroom door opened. Dressed in his black tuxedo and half top hat, Klein appeared in front of the two girls.

"Pleasant surprise? This is a pleasant surprise?" Selena's mouth turned agape as she felt perplexed.

At that moment, Klein suddenly reached out his hand and grabbed her by the wrist. He pulled her into the room as Elizabeth stood rooted to the ground.

Simultaneously, Klein's silver dagger struck forward as it spewed out his spirituality which quickly mended the door-shaped passage.

The invisible spirituality wall sealed off the room, insulating Selena's screams within.

Bang!

Klein suddenly closed the door and without even looking at Selena, he rushed to the desk.

The wine-red haired girl stopped screaming as she looked up and surveyed the room.

Her gaze rapidly turned cold as her skin was mottled with paleness. Her fingers rapidly grew sharp fingernails.

And at this moment, Klein had already returned to his Cogitation state. He trickled a drop of Moon flower and essential oil onto each candle as he

chanted loudly, "Supreme Lady of Crimson, Great Empress of Disaster and Horror.

"I pray for you to bestow your loving grace.

"Show your loving grace to the lost lamb, Selena Wood!"

While chanting, he picked up the fake goatskin and pushed it onto the candle representing the requester.

Whoosh!

He felt a cold wind blow behind him as an immense energy assaulted his body.

The goat skin was ignited and Klein threw it into a silver bowl. Then, he crouched downwards in accordance to his preparations to dodge the lethal strike.

Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh!

The wind howled ferociously, and Klein felt the uncontrolled outpour of his spirituality surging like the currents.

He saw the goatskin burning in the tiny silver bowl, burning in silent darkness, and he heard heavy items landing on the ground behind him.

Bam! Bang!

The two sounds followed one after another with almost no breaks in between. Wisps of dark green gases plunged into the silver bowl and vanished into the illusory darkness.

Klein rolled to the side and got up. He drew his revolver from his armpit holster. However, he saw that the adorable red-haired girl Selena had fallen

to the ground and the silver-coated mirror had shattered into countless broken pieces on the carpet.

Those shattered pieces didn't reflect Selena, but showed the ceiling and Klein's silhouette.

Then, through the Spirit Vision he had left active, Klein saw the wicked dark green in Selena's aura had vanished completely. Everything returned to normal, but she seemed more frail.

Phew… He had just relaxed when he felt a sharp, throbbing pain in his glabella and head.

The sharp pain spread all over his body and made him want to roll around on the floor.

Klein held his fists tight, and the veins on the back of his hands popped and became black. They looked like moving worms.

Simultaneously, he heard silent screams and the whispers that ripped at his mind.

It took him nearly twenty seconds to survive the ordeal. His forehead and vest was soaked in cold sweat.

The ritualistic magic I used sucked up all my spirituality and almost made my Beyonder powers lose control? Klein made a rough guess of the situation.

That also made him notice that he had digested quite a bit of the remaining energy in the potion. Based on his calculations, if he had the strength at the time he consumed the potion, he believed that there was no way he could have survived the ordeal. He could have become a monster straightaway.

"Acting" is quite effective after all… Klein tapped his glabella and wiped away his sweat.

He turned towards the altar, tapped his chest four times, and said out loudly, "Praise the Lady!"

Following that, he extinguished the candles and quickly tidied up the altar.

Finally, he placed the items back into the desk and used his silver dagger to dispel the spirituality wall seal.

Whoosh!

The sound of the wind echoed before subsiding. Klein let out a long sigh of relief and felt a sense of lingering fear.

"If I hadn't walked through the process beforehand and successfully completed the ritual then things would have become troublesome… Besides, I still don't know who my opponent or enemy is… Thankfully—yes—thankfully, the room was carpeted, so I didn't damage my clothes while rolling…"

He shook his head and reached out to open the wooden door to Selena's bedroom.

"How was it?" Elizabeth took two steps back and asked nervously.

Klein looked at her terrified expression and took off his half top hat before saying with a warm smile, "I've already corrected the mistake of her magic mirror divination. It's been resolved now."

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CHAPTER 87
EXHORTATION

"Has it really been resolved?" Elizabeth asked in disbelief.

Klein smiled and nodded casually.

"Yes."

"It wasn't too hard."

That last part was a lie… He added inwardly.

Perhaps it was the fact that Klein had been calm and collected all this time, or perhaps he was her only ray of hope. Either way, Elizabeth didn't doubt him any more. She patted her chest and heaved a sigh of relief.

"Thank you. You truly are a trustworthy gentleman. I was scared senseless just now.

"How is Selena? Is she fine now?"

"She might remain unconscious for the next few minutes, but she's completely fine now. Oh, two to three days of weakness is to be expected." Klein suddenly had a stern expression on his face as he asked, "Who taught her mysticism? Didn't he tell her about the basic taboos?"

Elizabeth straightened up a little more like a student who had just been scolded by her teacher.

She thought for a moment before saying, "Selena once mentioned that her teacher is Hanass Vincent. She met him a year ago at the Divination Club on Howes Street."

Hanass Vincent… On the surface, he didn't seem to teach anything questionable about magic mirror divination, but he secretly been teaching dark divination… If I knew about this earlier, then I would have reported it to Captain and have raided him earlier… Klein felt some regret as he asked in a deep voice, "Was he also the one who taught Selena magic mirror divination?"

Klein was left with a lingering sense of fear because this matter had nearly affected his sister — Melissa!

Elizabeth nodded cautiously.

"Yes, but Selena had tried magic mirror divination a few times without any success. Oh, today she told me that she had a peek at her teacher's hidden incantations and that there would be no problems."

She was basically an expert at courting death… Klein massaged his temples to alleviate his headache.

"Do you still remember the incantations she recited?"

Well… Although Hanass Vincent had not voluntarily imparted the dangerous knowledge to Selena, it's obvious that he had been experimenting with it to extend an invitation to a mysterious, unknown entity. This would become a problem sooner or later. It has to be dealt with quickly before it gets worse and becomes a problem for someone else…

"I remember a part of it…" Elizabeth recalled. "She recited it in Hermes. As you know, I was only exposed to Hermes just recently. All I remember is her using the terms 'revolve,' 'spirit,' 'Creator,' and 'grace.'"

Creator? The True Creator? Many underground mysticism enthusiasts believe in this ancient entity revered by many secret organizations… Yes, an entity that appeared 1000 years ago during the early stages of the Fifth Epoch! Klein nodded amidst his thought and said, "Remember to ask Selena about the entire incantation after she wakes up, then find an opportunity to tell me."

"Alright," Elizabeth replied without any reservations.

But she immediately asked, feeling a little confused, "Mr. Moretti, why don't you ask her yourself?"

"I don't want to let Melissa know I enjoy mysticism. Can you help me keep that a secret?" Klein asked in return.

Elizabeth bit her lips, her eyes sparkling.

"No problem. Melissa prefers machines to mystery. She likes logic over instinct."

Klein placed his hat in front of his chest and bowed gentlemanly.

"Thank you for your understanding. As for Selena, you do know that she's not someone who can keep a secret."

"A more accurate description is that she likes to share secrets with others," Elizabeth agreed.

Klein put on his hat and thought for a moment before saying, "Remember to tell Selena after she wakes up that she suddenly fainted and shattered her mirror. I think her memory probably stopped at the point when she began the magic mirror divination."

Seeing Elizabeth nod, he put on a stern expression once again and said, "Remember, be it divinations or trying other mysticism rituals, do not pray to any other entities other than the seven orthodox divinities! You should

immediately burn those types of incantations and stay far away from anyone distributing those materials!

"If I hadn't noticed this in time, Selena would have turned into a monster or an evil spirit in ten minutes, and everyone here would have been killed, myself included!"

Thinking about the ice-cold Selena in the mirror, Elizabeth had no doubts about what Klein had just said. She sighed with lingering fear and said, "I understand and I'll remember. I'll also keep an eye on Selena."

"Alright, go and take care of Selena." Klein raised his black cane and walked toward the stairway.

As he walked, his eyes became darker. He took out a single penny with his right hand and flicked it into the air.

"Selena is alright now.

"Selena is alright now."

…

Klein quickly repeated the description, then caught the falling coin. He saw George III's face facing upward.

This was not a simplification of spirit dowsing. Instead, it was a simplification of dream divination. At that moment, Klein had forced himself into a state of sleep with the aid of Cogitation in order to take a tour through the spirit world. The heads and tails of the coin were a symbolic manifestation.

Heads represented affirmation, while tails indicated dissent!

Great, everything is fine now… Klein twirled the bronze coin with his fingers happily.

That was a simplification only a Seer could accomplish.

…

Elizabeth was staring at Klein's back and saw the flying coin before he caught it.

Only when Klein vanished down the staircase did she turn to enter the bedroom. She saw Selena asleep on the floor with shattered pieces of the mirror beside her.

She held her breath and tiptoed into the room as she looked at the fragments of the mirror. She made sure that the ice-cold Selena was no longer present; instead, the fragments were reflecting the ceiling.

Phew. Put completely at ease, Melissa heaved a long sigh of relief.

But despite her efforts, she couldn't move Selena to the bed. Instead, she nudged her awake.

"Elizabeth… What happened to me? Did I get drunk?" Selena asked weakly, the glow in her eyes having turned considerably dull while her eyes were filled with confusion.

Elizabeth thought for a moment and replied in a serious tone, "No, Selena, something happened to you. Your magic mirror divination invited a malicious entity."

"Is that so?" Selena weakly made her way to the bed with Elizabeth's help. She rubbed her temple as she said, "All I remember is when I started the magic mirror divination."

Elizabeth told a half-truth, "You were a completely different person during the ritual. The you in the mirror was completely different from the you in real life… I was very scared. Using the excuse of giving you a surprise, I

brought you into the bedroom before I snatched your mirror and shattered it onto the carpet. After that… after that, you fainted."

"Blessed be the Goddess, you're okay now!"

"I-I don't remember anything…" Selena muttered, her face pale.

The more Selena tried to remember, the emptier her mind became, and the more afraid she felt.

Subconsciously, she glanced at her desk and noticed that the placement of items was clearly different.

Just what happened exactly… Selena tried hard to remember, but she could only faintly remember a man in a black suit and hat. He was not strong or tall, but he had a straight back.

"Selena," Elizabeth said seriously, "I met a mysticism expert when I went to the underground market to purchase the amulet. He said that we shouldn't pray to any entity other than the seven orthodox divinities. Otherwise, we would be sure to invite disaster. Promise me, don't try this anymore. I didn't even know if what I did could save you just now!"

Selena was scared senseless. She nodded in a daze.

"No more, I'll never try this again!"

"And, just what did the incantations of your mysticism mean? If I have the chance to meet the mysticism expert again, I will ask him for you," Elizabeth asked, feigning nonchalance.

Selena rubbed her temple and said, "Spirit that revolves this world, the grace of the True Creator, the eyes that look at fate."

…

Tap! Tap! Tap!

Klein smoothed the creases and patted the dust off his clothes as he walked down the stairs.

After that, he took off his hat and returned slowly to the long dining table.

"Where did you go? It has been nearly 10 minutes," Selena's brother, Chris, asked as he folded his hand.

Klein smiled and replied, "To the bathroom, then upstairs to acquaint myself with the ladies."

"I appreciate your honesty," Chris praised in laughter.

He had the red hair and short build that ran in their family. He wore gold-framed glasses and had quite the personality; he was an exceptional lawyer.

You wouldn't say that if you knew that I had knocked your sister unconscious upstairs… Klein replied humbly, "We were merely engaging in academic discussion."

In the area of mysticism…

He put down his hat and returned to his seat. He received his two cards as the new round started.

Flipping up the corner of his cards, he saw the King of Spades and the Ace of Diamonds.

Looks like I became luckier… Is this payback for doing a good deed? Klein took out a coin in preparation to place his bet.

Since Hanass didn't intentionally reveal the incantation to Selena, there's no need for me to urgently report this to Captain…

He continued his cautious playstyle in the following rounds, only betting when he had a good hand. He didn't take any chances to bluff and didn't win much. When the game ended at half past ten, he had won six pence.

"I won two soli and eight pence." Benson fiddled with the notes and coins in his hand.

"I didn't expect you to be an expert at poker," Klein praised, laughing.

"No, I don't play often, but I know that this is the same as negotiation. You have to hide your cards and figure out the hidden cards that people have before using various means to scare or entice them…" Benson hadn't finished his sentence when he saw Melissa and the rest coming down from the second floor.

"It's time to go home," said Klein as he glanced at his sister and her friends while rubbing his temples.

The throbbing pain in his head remained.

After that, Klein went to the bathroom once more and took the opportunity to walk past Elizabeth and obtained the complete incantation.

Returning to his siblings, he smiled and said, "Oh right, I suddenly remembered something. I need to head back to the company for a while. Shall we go to Zouteland Street first? It'll be quick."

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CHAPTER 88
REPORT

"What is it?" Benson asked casually.

Melissa looked at her brother with a serious expression because she felt that Klein's behavior tonight was strange as well. In fact, it only looked slightly more normal than Elizabeth's behavior and, later, Selena's.

Klein chuckled as he had long thought of an excuse and said, "There was a mistake in one of the document descriptions, and I already informed my colleagues that I would hand it over to them when I arrive early at the company tomorrow morning. So, I can either amend it now since it's on the way or wake up at least half an hour earlier tomorrow morning. No doubt, I've chosen to do the former."

"Ah, no wonder. I had a nagging feeling that your mind wasn't in the game, so you were actually thinking about work." Benson smiled, suddenly enlightened. "No, I apologize. I should say, the card game helped you think."

"Alright, we shall wait for you." Melissa looked away and smoothed out the ruffles of her engageantes.

As it was past the operation time for both track and trackless public carriages, the three siblings bid their hosts farewell before hiring a carriage nearby. It cost two soli for forty-five minutes.

"I've heard that every carriage driver that rents out their own carriage adds ridiculous fees," Benson complained in a low voice. He had used most of the money that he won earlier to pay the driver.

Klein smiled and replied, "I think it's very acceptable. After all, it is almost eleven o'clock."

"I was just joking. I thought that we could actually share the carriage with other guests. Forty-five minutes can take us to many places." Benson looked out of the window at the other people who were hiring carriages one after another.

I know, ride-sharing… Klein rubbed the top of his silver-inlaid walking stick and said, "We don't have a problem with that, but the other customers might. Benson, did you notice that they care a lot about their image and at looking respectable? I think that might be common among the middle-class."

"Hmm." Benson nodded seriously and said, "The Wood family was much more extravagant than I imagined. However, Wood's weekly salary is only four pounds per week… Heh, 'looking respectable' might be the biggest difference between the middle-class people and curly-haired baboons."

Do you have something against curly-haired baboons… Klein almost burst out laughing.

Melissa didn't join in on their discussion. She took a seat and sized up Klein from time to time. Her gaze was sending chills down his spine.

The two-wheeled horse carriage was traveling quickly in the dark, quiet street. They arrived at Zouteland Street in only twelve minutes.

"Wait for me here. Five minutes, it won't be more than five minutes," Klein emphasized. He put on his top hat, grabbed his cane, and got off the carriage.

As the carriage driver was charging based on time instead of distance, the driver didn't mind waiting.

Going up the stairs, Klein arrived at the Blackthorn Security Company and knocked on the door.

Within ten seconds, the door was opened wide. Leonard Mitchell appeared before him in a vest and shirt.

"You're not on duty tonight," Leonard pointed out, looking surprised to see him.

Klein was only on guard duty once a week for the Chanis Gate. They maintained a regular work schedule for the rest of the time. As for emergencies that happened at night, they would be dealt with by the Sleepless who enjoyed the night.

However, only getting two to three hours of sleep a day can cause baldness and memory loss… Whenever he thought about this, Klein couldn't help but ridicule Captain Dunn Smith in his mind.

"I have something to report," he answered simply.

"There's a mission?" Leonard asked casually, moving aside.

When Klein entered the reception hall, he saw Dunn coming out in his black windbreaker. His gray eyes were dark as usual.

"Captain, I came across an incident involving the supernatural."

"Give me the details," Dunn asked directly.

Klein recounted the whole story from earlier and reported the steps that he took to deal with it.

“…So, I think there's a need to investigate Hanass Vincent."

Back then he believed that since the evil entity that was invited by the magic mirror divination hadn't caused a disaster, and there was no

indication that he was in extreme danger. That meant that the entity probably still needed more time. It didn't want to awaken or possess Selena ahead of time; therefore, as long as its goals were not exposed, the evil entity chose to observe the situation. Under such circumstances, it wasn't hard for Elizabeth to trick Selena to head to the entrance of the bedroom.

"You've done well. You seized the opportunity before the evil spirit fully materialized to possess her body completely." Dunn lifted his head lightly and said, "Let us take care of the follow-up investigations. You can return home to rest."

Klein heaved a sigh of relief and chortled.

"I thought you would make this my initiation mission and make me complete it alone."

From the incantation that Elizabeth provided him, Hanass Vincent was certainly dangerous…

"That's because there's already an initiation mission for you." The desultory Leonard chuckled by the side.

"What?" Klein was shocked.

Dunn smirked and explained with his soothing voice, "At around seven tonight, the police station referred us to a case. From our initial assessments, there doesn't seem to be any danger or urgency, so it was decided that you would complete it on your own tomorrow."

"Alright, don't ask about the case. Rest well tonight and move your day off to Tuesday or Wednesday."

Captain, doing that only affects my sleep… Plus, Monday afternoon is when the Tarot Gathering takes place… Do I need to send a postponement notification to Justice and The Hanged Man? Klein shook his head and smiled bitterly. He then bade farewell and left.

Exiting the stairway, he suddenly sensed something. He lifted his head to look towards the carriage that they had hired. He only saw Melissa looking at him silently through the window.

When they made eye contact, Melissa suddenly looked away and sat properly.

The corner of Klein's mouth twitched, and he got into the carriage, pretending nothing had happened.

Under the crimson moon and pure night sky, the carriage moved quickly down one street after the other.

When they returned home, Klein yielded the bathroom to Benson for his shower while he went to Melissa's bedroom and knocked twice.

Melissa, who was planning to use the other bathroom, opened the door and looked at her brother suspiciously.

"Melissa, do you have any questions that you'd like to ask? I know you do," Klein asked straightforwardly.

Don't just observe me in silence…

Melissa lips trembled and creased her eyebrows as she spoke.

"Klein, what did you do to Elizabeth? She seemed a bit off."

"And, later on, Selena started acting very strange too."

Klein had prepared his reply.

"Do you know that Elizabeth and Selena are mysticism enthusiasts?"

“…Yeah, but I don't like it. I don't think there's anything that can't be explained in this world," Melissa answered seriously after being

momentarily taken aback. "Anything that seems unexplainable is due to the fact that the knowledge we have grasped is insufficient."

"Yeah, I think so too," Klein echoed her sentiments guiltily.

I once thought so too, until I successfully courted death…

He coughed lightly and continued, "Mysticism involves Hermes, the language used specifically for ancient worship ceremonies and prayers. Elizabeth knew that I am good at it. Heh, it is within a historian's domain after all. So, she asked me about the pronunciation of corresponding words and their actual meanings."

Melissa nodded lightly, signifying her acceptance of her brother's explanation. It went according to her understanding of both parties.

"As for why Elizabeth and Selena became weird later on, I have no idea about the actual reasons." Klein removed himself from the picture first, then he said, "But, I can make a guess."

"You managed to guess it?" Melissa blurted out in shock.

Klein lifted his hand and patted his lips.

"I could guess from the contents of what Elizabeth asked. The few Hermes words were related to divination, as well as the worshiping of evil entities. Yes, when Selena did the magic mirror divination, did she recite in Hermes?"

He proactively brought that up in order to remind his sister to keep her guard up against similar situations. It would be even better if she could cut off contact with Selena and Elizabeth.

"Yes…" Melissa replied after a delay. "I think I understand why Elizabeth and Selena were acting strange…"

Then, Klein asked deliberately, "As Selena's magic mirror divination involved a wicked, illegal belief, perhaps Elizabeth found an opportunity to criticize and correct Selena's mistake after she clarified with me the actual meaning of the Hermes that Selena had used?"

"I think so," Melissa didn't doubt this conclusion because she had made the same deduction herself.

Klein let out a breath of relief upon seeing that he had successfully directed the flow of the conversation.

"In the future, it's best if you advised Selena to put her beliefs in the orthodox."

Then, he tapped four spots on his chest just like a priest.

"Yes, I will!" Melissa replied, sounding determined.

"And, don't tell Elizabeth and Selena about our deduction or about the things that I've said. I actually promised Elizabeth not to tell you," Klein emphasized.

"Okay." Melissa nodded lightly.

…

On Monday morning at eight, in the Blackthorn Security Company.

Klein took off his hat and greeted Rozanne and Bredt. After exchanging a few words, he entered Captain Dunn Smith's office.

He pushed the door open and looked around. He suddenly had a shock, because Dunn's face was pretty pale and his gray eyes looked clouded, without their usual darkness.

"What happened? Hanass Vincent?" Klein asked in concern and shock.

Dunn rubbed his forehead, took a sip of coffee, and replied with a bitter smile, "Hanass Vincent is dead."

"Who killed him ahead of time?" Klein sat before Dunn with his cane in hand.

Dunn didn't answer immediately but sighed and said, "Leonard and I went to look for Hanass Vincent last night. As his usual behavior didn't show any unusual signs and there was nothing odd about his house, I decided to enter his dreams to look for clues."

"In his dream, in his dream…"

His eyes showed fear as Dunn repeated himself twice, that was when he said, "In his dream, I saw a cross, a huge cross, one that blotted out the sky. On the huge cross there was a naked man nailed to it with black nails. His arms and legs were pinned with his arms extended outwards. He was hung upside down, his head hung low like a chandelier. There was strips of blood stains on his body."

"Upon seeing such a scene, I lost consciousness. I left Hanass Vincent's dream, and when I woke up, Leonard told me that Hanass had died in his sleep."

"Huge cross, hung upside down, the man covered in blood stains… It's similar to some of the stories of the True Creator that some of the hidden organizations believe in, but there are considerable differences too…" Klein made a deduction in suspicion.

The few hidden organizations that believed in the True Creator had only appeared in the last two or three centuries, such as the Aurora Order and the Iron and Blood Cross Order. However, similar such depictions had never disappeared over the past thousand plus years.

Dunn rubbed his forehead again. "We'll follow-up on this. As for you, go ahead and complete your initiation mission first."

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CHAPTER 89
A SIMPLE MISSION

Klein nodded and said, "Alright, but I still don't know what my mission is."

"Nothing dangerous. I haven't seen any signs of danger at the very least," Dunn emphasized. "This is a case which was referred to us by Golden Indus's police department. The famous philanthropist Sir Deweyville has been experiencing unusual harassment over the past month. Be it his bodyguards, the security guards he has employed, or the police, none of them have been able to find the culprit. Inspector Tolle, who is in charge of this case, suspects that it involves Beyonder powers and, thus, handed the case over to us."

I saw Sir Deweyville at the library the other day and noticed that he was feeling down and lethargic. So it was a result of being harassed… Klein knitted his brows and asked, "What kind of harassment is it?"

There hasn't been any physical harm inflicted yet; thus, the harassment wouldn't be considered dangerous.

"Sir Deweyville hears moans and cries every night, no matter where he is, be it Tingen or not. This has affected his sleep quality negatively." Dunn flipped the notes in his hands. "He has seen a psychiatrist and has asked his butlers and servants to confirm that it was not an illusion. Having confirmed that it isn't a hallucination, thus, it is suspected that someone is harassing him."

Closing the file, Dunn looked up at Klein.

"Change into your probationary inspector uniform in the break room, then meet Inspector Tolle who is in charge of this case at the Shooting Club. He'll provide you with more details."

"Probationary inspector uniform?" Klein asked instinctively.

Dunn rubbed his forehead and smiled.

"Half of our salary comes from the police department, and the title of probationary inspector doesn't merely belong in the records. When you met Leonard and I for the first time, we were also wearing uniforms. This is a perk held by fully official members. Yes, the 'Perks' as Emperor Roselle would call it."

Unfortunately, I can't wear it as a casual outfit. Otherwise, I'd be able to have another spare outfit when my clothes are being washed… Klein picked up his cane and bade farewell before leaving the captain's office.

He headed toward the break room and saw a black and white checkered uniform, complete with leather boots, placed on the table. The uniform's peak cap was embroidered with the logo of the police department—two crossed swords and a crown. Located on the shoulder was a black and white epaulet with a shimmering silver star.

"This is a probationary inspector uniform?" Klein glanced at the uniform and noticed a string of numbers under the silver stars: 06-254.

He had some understanding of the police rank structure in the Loen Kingdom. He knew that those at the top were the minister and the chief secretary of the police force. Under them were the respective commissioners, deputy commissioners, assistant commissioners of the various police departments. Those in the middle were superintendents and inspectors, while those at the very bottom were the sergeants and constables.

After closing the door, Klein took off his suit and hat before changing into the uniform.

He hung his suit up and left the room. He made his way into the clerk's office and looked at himself using the full-body mirror that Rozanne brought to him.

The young man in the mirror had black hair with gentle brown eyes. The uniform on his body accentuated him with a heroic spirit.

"Not bad." Klein praised himself narcissistically. He left his cane in the office and left the Blackthorn Security Company.

Inside his pockets were a full set of equipment, ranging from weapons to his police badge.

…

At the hall of the Shooting Club.

Klein met Inspector Tolle immediately since he was the only one in a police uniform.

Of course, there's me too… Klein thought.

There were two silver stars on the epaulets of Inspector Tolle's uniform. His clothes were propped up by his stomach and he had a thick blond mustache. His frame was tall but not imposing. Perhaps, it was imposing in the past.

"Moretti? Klein Moretti?" Inspector Tolle noticed Klein and welcomed him with a smile.

"Hello, Inspector Tolle, I believe that you have the right person," Klein replied amicably, then following his memories, he raised his right arm, kept his fingers straight and tight before saluting.

Tolle chuckled.

"I can tell that you'll be a young man who's easy to get along with. That's good. Shall we head to Sir Deweyville's place now?"

Even though he was a higher rank than Klein, the tone in his query was obviously friendly.

"No problem." Klein thought for a moment before he said, "You can fill me in on the details of the case on the carriage."

"Sure." Tolle stroked his thick blond beard and guided Klein out of the Shooting Club. They boarded a carriage which was stopped on the other side of the road.

There was the "two crossed swords and a crown" police emblem on the carriage, and it came with a personal carriage driver.

"Sir Deweyville is a believer of the Goddess, so we referred the case to you," Tolle said quickly as he sat down.

"I know. The fine knight is a common figure on the covers of newspapers and magazines." Klein flashed a friendly smile.

Tolle picked up the document docket beside him and removed the seal before taking out the materials inside. As he flipped through them, he explained, "Regardless, even if you are aware of it, I need to provide you with the detailed briefing.

"Sir Deweyville is one of the richest tycoons of Tingen City. He built his career beginning with a lead and porcelain factory. It has now expanded to steel, coal, shipping, banking, and bonds. He is also a great philanthropist that has been praised by the king, having set up the Deweyville Charity Foundation, the Deweyville Trust, and the Deweyville Library… He was also knighted five years ago… If he were willing to run for mayor, I don't think anyone in Tingen City could contest with him.

"But Backlund is his goal; he wants to become a member of parliament. We once suspected that the harassment might be related to this, but we have no clues to this date."

Klein nodded slightly and said, "We can't rule out that possibility, but there's nothing to confirm that suspicion as of now."

Tolle didn't dwell on this point. He continued, "From the sixth of last month, Sir Deweyville has heard painful skin-numbing moans every night when he sleeps, akin to a patient's fight for his life. He has checked the surrounding rooms multiple times, but he hasn't found anything unusual. His butler and servants have also confirmed that they heard such sounds, but it is simply softer for them.

"In the beginning, Sir Deweyville believed that this matter would pass quickly and didn't pay too much attention to it. But the moans became more and more frequent, to the point of occasionally happening during the day. There was even the addition of heart-wrenching cries."

"This has made Sir Deweyville lose sleep, time and time again he had no choice but to leave Tingen to his villa in the villages. But it was to no avail. The moans and cries persisted. Similarly, the phenomenon persisted even in Backlund, just that it wasn't as serious.

"He employed security guards to check his surroundings, but they didn't find any clues. Our preliminary investigations also came up with nothing.

"Sir Deweyville, who has been tortured for more than a month, is on the brink of collapse. He visited psychiatrists time and time again but was unable to have his problems resolved. He told us that if this problem was not solved within a month, he would leave Tingen and head to Backlund. He believes that there would be people who can help him there."

After listening to Tolle's explanation, Klein quickly analyzed and came up with a few possibilities.

He offended a Beyonder and is suffering from a curse?

No, if he was suffering from a curse, the butlers and servants in his house wouldn't hear the same things…

There's a Beyonder with unknown motives hidden among his servants and bodyguards?

But the problem stems from the point that there has been no requests made of Sir Deweyville over the past month…

Perhaps Sir Deweyville accidentally came into contact with some vengeful evil spirit?

That possibility cannot be ruled out…

The carriage entered the Golden Indus borough while Klein was still deep in thought. It stopped at the door of Sir Deweyville's house.

A steel fence surrounded a lush garden. There were two statues by the side of the hollowed metal gates, a magnificent fountain that showered a marble sculpture with water, an expansive two-story building, as well as a path wide enough to fit three carriages.

"Even the knight's house is only two stories high… The newspaper reported that Backlund is experimenting with building ten-story apartments…" Klein got off the carriage and saw a sergeant with three chevron stripes walking over briskly.

He looked at Klein and saluted.

"Good morning, Sir!"

"Good morning." Klein nodded with a smile.

Tolle smiled.

"This is Sergeant Gate, you can tell him if you need anything.

"This is Probationary inspector Moretti, a history and psychological expert from the police department," Tolle introduced Klein to Gate.

…*I don't deserve such a title.*… Klein felt a little embarrassed.

After the greetings, Gate pointed to the two-story building behind the fountain and said, "Sir Deweyville is waiting for us."

"Alright." Klein caressed the revolver at his waist.

That was his best bet against an enemy.

Since he was in police uniform, he could put his revolver in a holster at his hip, making it easier to draw it.

As they spoke, the trio made their way down the path, around the fountain, and arrived outside the door.

By then, the door was already opened by a servant who was waiting politely at the side.

As Klein pretended to adjust his hat, he tapped twice on his glabella to activate his Spirit Vision before entering the house.

The square-faced Sir Deweyville was massaging his forehead in the hall. He was clearly in low spirits. His blond hair and blue eyes were either dry or dull as though he had aged considerably by at least five years.

"Good morning, Sir Deweyville." Klein, Tolle, and Gate bowed at the same time.

Sir Deweyville stood up and forced out a smile.

"Good morning, Officers. I hope that you can resolve what has been causing me distress."

At that moment, Klein squinted and slightly knitted his brows.

Other than his low spirits, Klein couldn't find any other problems with Sir Deweyville.

That's odd… He thought for a moment before he said, "Sir, in which room did you first hear the moans?"

"My bedroom." Sir Deweyville shook his head.

"Can we take a look?" inquired Klein.

"Haven't you checked it many times?" the middle-aged butler interrupted from the side.

It was clear that he didn't notice that Klein was the partner of the kind-hearted soul that had "not pocketed the money that he picked up."

Klein smiled, composed.

"Those were my colleagues, not me."

"Sir, this is an expert sent by the police agency," Tolle said, taking the opportunity to introduce him.

Deweyville looked at the young expert and said, "Alright, Cullen, take him to my room."

"Sir, I hope that you will come with us," Klein said seriously.

Deweyville hesitated for a few seconds before saying, "If that can solve the problem…”

He grabbed his cane as he spoke. He made his way feebly toward the staircase with the butler Cullen and several guards beside him, ready to support him if needed.

Klein surveyed the surroundings as he followed behind them silently.

One step, two steps, three steps… They arrived at the second story and entered the master bedroom.

Klein didn't have the time to survey the surroundings when the hair on his body stood on their ends.

This was feedback from his spiritual perception!

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CHAPTER 90
FINDINGS BY SIGHT

Sir Deweyville's bedroom was larger than the living room and dining room of Klein's house combined. It was partitioned into a place for a bed, a living space, a changing room, a bathroom, and a study desk and bookshelves. The furnishings were exquisite, and the details were extravagant.

But to Klein, the light seemed dimmer and the temperature was several degrees colder than the outside.

At the same time, he seemed to hear the sound of sobbing and moaning, as though one was putting up a last-ditch struggle.

Klein was in a trance, and everything suddenly returned to normal. The sunlight shone brightly through the window and poured over the entire bedroom. The temperature was reasonable, neither too high nor low. The surrounding policemen, bodyguards, and butler were quiet. No one spoke.

This… He looked sideways at the classic yet luxurious bed. He felt there were pairs of blurry eyes lingering in the shadow, like the moths that fearlessly stayed around gas lamps.

Taking a few steps closer, Klein lost the earlier images from his Spirit Vision.

Not a standard wraith or an evil spirit… What is it exactly? Klein frowned and recalled the mysticism knowledge that he had been learning all this time.

From what he had seen, the mission would have been easy if it was passed to a Corpse Collector, Gravedigger, or Spirit Medium. It was obviously not within his domain of expertise.

Holding back his urge to use divination as an investigative approach, Klein looked around slowly to look for other traces to confirm the few guesses on his mind.

"Inspector." Sir Deweyville hesitated and asked, "Did you discover anything?"

"If it were that easy, I believe my colleagues wouldn't have waited until now," Klein replied, glancing at the philanthropist subconsciously.

Just as he planned to retract his gaze, he suddenly saw that there was a faint white human figure reflected behind Sir Deweyville in the mirror behind him.

No, there were many figures overlapping each other, resulting in a white distorted figure!

The figure flashed by and Klein seemed to hear faint sobbing.

Phew… He let out a breath to ease his nerves, having almost drawn his gun out out of fright.

Heightened spiritual perception with Spirit Vision will one day scare me senseless… Klein tried relaxing his tense nerves by joking around before redirecting his focus back onto Sir Deweyville.

This time, he saw something different.

Now that he was in the bedroom, Sir Deweyville had a faint and twisted figure shimmering around him. It even dimmed the lighting of that area.

Every flash was accompanied by an illusionary cry and moan that could hardly be detected by an ordinary person.

Hardly audible for an ordinary person under ordinary circumstances? Is it because it's daytime? Klein nodded as he thought.

He had an initial judgment for this case.

It was resentment that was haunting Sir Deweyville. It was the remnant spirituality that resulted from unresolved emotions before a human's death!

If such feelings of resentment stayed in this world over a period of time, they would become a terrifying wrathful spirit after becoming stronger.

However, Sir Deweyville was a famous philanthropist. Even Benson, who was a picky person, was in awe of him. Why would he be bogged down with the resentment of the dead? Is he actually two-faced? Could it be the means of a Beyonder with nefarious intentions? Klein guessed the possibilities suspiciously.

After some thought, he looked towards Deweyville and asked, "Honorable Sir, I have a few questions."

"Please ask." Deweyville sat down wearily.

Klein organized his thoughts and asked, "When you leave here to go to a new place, such as the village or Backlund, do you temporarily get at least half a night's worth of peace before the situation resumes and gradually worsens? Even when you sleep during the daytime, are you able to hear moaning and sobbing sounds?"

Deweyville's half-closed eyes suddenly widened as his deep blue eyes were suddenly beaming with hope.

"Yes, did you find the root of the problem?"

Only then did he realize that due to his extended period of insomnia and his poor mental state, he had completely forgotten to inform the police about such an important clue!

Seeing that Klein's question had uncovered something useful, Inspector Tolle relaxed. He knew that the Nighthawk had found a clue.

Sergeant Gate was surprised and curious too. He couldn't help but look closely at the psychological expert, Klein.

It coincided with the traits of gradual entanglement and the feature of accumulation… Having received the feedback, Klein had basically confirmed the cause.

Then, he had two ways of helping Sir Deweyville to shake off the burden. One was to set up an altar directly around the man and remove the resentment of the dead entirely using ritualistic magic. The second option was to use other mysticism measures to find the root of the problem and solve it from there.

Taking into consideration the rule of preventing commoners from learning of Beyonder powers to the best of his abilities, Klein planned on first attempting the second method. Only if it failed would he pray to the Goddess.

"Sir, yours is a psychological illness, a mental problem," he spoke nonsense with absolute seriousness while looking at Deweyville.

Sir Deweyville knitted his brows and asked in reply, "Are you telling me that I'm a mental patient, that I need to enter an asylum?"

"No, nothing that serious. Actually, most people have psychological problems to one degree or another," Klein casually comforted him. "Please allow me to introduce myself again. I am a psychological expert from the Awwa County Police."

"Psychological expert?" Deweyville and his butler looked at Inspector Tolle who they were familiar with.

Tolle nodded seriously and confirmed that it was true.

"Alright, what do you need of me for my treatment? Besides, I don't understand why my butler, my bodyguards, and my servants will hear the sobbing and moaning as well…" Deweyville held his walking stick with both hands, looking confused.

Klein replied professionally, "I will explain it to you after it's resolved."

"Please tell your butler, your servants, and your bodyguards to leave. Inspector Tolle, Sergeant Gate, please leave as well. I need a quiet environment to begin the initial treatment."

A "treatment" with magic… Inspector Tolle added in his heart and nodded at Sir Deweyville.

Deweyville fell silent for more than ten seconds before saying, "Cullen, take them to the living room on the second floor."

"Yes, Sir." Butler Cullen didn't retort since the request was made by a police officer, a probationary inspector, and a psychological expert.

After watching them leave the room one after another and closing the door behind them, Klein looked at Deweyville who had dark blond hair and blue eyes, and said, "Sir, please lie down on your bed. Relax and try to sleep."

"…Alright." Deweyville hung his coat and hat on the clothes rack before walking slowly to the side of the bed and then laid down.

Klein drew all the curtains, turning the room dark.

He took off his pendant and quickly used spirit pendulum to determine any dangers. Then, he sat on the rocking chair near the end of the bed, traced a

spherical light in his mind, and entered Cogitation. He allowed the world of spirituality to extend before his eyes.

Then, he leaned against the back of the chair and fell into a deep sleep, allowing for his Astral Projection to make contact with the external world.

He was using the technique of dream divination, to let himself be in the spiritual environment like he was dreaming, so as to communicate with each and every resentment that plagued Sir Deweyville.

Only communication would be able to give him an answer and solve the problem!

Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh!

A sad sob reverberated in Klein's ear, and he "saw" that the white translucent figures were floating around him.

A painful groan echoed as Klein, who barely regained his mental processes, extended his right hand and touched one of them.

Suddenly, the figures swarmed at him like moths darting toward a fire.

The image before Klein's eyes suddenly turned blurry and his brain seemed to be cleaved into two. Half of his mind was calmly observing while the other half saw a "mirror."

In the "mirror," there was a young girl dressed in worker garbs. She looked strong and fit as she walked in a dust-covered factory while her head throbbed in pain.

Her eyesight occasionally turned blurry and her body became skinnier by the day.

She seemed to hear someone calling her Charlotte, and the voice said that she had a hysterical illness.

Hysterical illness? She looked towards the mirror and saw that she had a faint blue line on her gum.

…

The "mirror's view" switched and Klein saw another girl called Mary.

She too walked into the lead factory, young and lively.

Suddenly, half of her face started twitching, followed by her arm and leg on the same side.

"You have epilepsy." She heard someone say while her whole body was convulsing.

As she twitched and fell, the intensity increased before she finally lost consciousness.

…

There was another girl, and she was depressed. She was walking around the street in a daze, to the point of having a speech impediment.

She had a very bad headache, and she had a blue line on her gums. She would also convulse from time to time.

She met a doctor, and the doctor said, "Lafayette, this is a result of lead poisoning."

The doctor looked at her with pity and saw her convulse again. She twitched continuously, and the doctor saw that her eyes had lost all their light.

…

Many images appeared before Klein, and he remained immersed within them and calmly observed.

Suddenly, he understood the plight of the girls [1].

The female workers had been in extended contact with white lead. They had all died of lead poisoning as a result of long-term exposure to the dust and powder.

Sir Deweyville had a lead factory under his name and also two porcelain factories. All of them hired comparatively cheaper female workers!

Klein "saw" all of that in silence, and felt that there was something that still had not been clarified.

Such "death resentment" was insignificant. They could not affect reality or have any effect on Deweyville even when accumulated.

Unless— Unless there was a more powerful and stubborn resentment that had united them all.

Just then, he "saw" another girl.

The girl was no more than 18 years old, but she was glazing the porcelain in the factory.

"Hayley, how are you doing lately? Do you still have a headache? If it gets too serious, remember to inform me. Sir Deweyville has enforced a rule that people with severe headaches cannot continue being in contact with lead and must leave the factory," an elder lady asked with concern.

Hayley touched her forehead and replied with a smile, "Just a little, I'm okay."

"Tell me tomorrow if it gets any worse," the elderly lady exhorted.

Hayley agreed. When she returned home, she massaged her forehead from time to time.

She saw that her parents and brother had returned, but their faces looked hopeless.

"Your father and brother lost their jobs…" her mother said as she wiped her tears.

Her father and brother hung their heads low and muttered, "We will try to get some work at the harbor."

"But we don't even have bread money for the day after tomorrow… Maybe we will need to move to Lower Street…" Hayley's mother looked at her with reddened eyes. "When are you getting your pay? It's ten soli, right?"

Hayley massaged her forehead again.

"Yeah, Saturday. Saturday."

She didn't say anything else and remained as quiet as usual. She returned to the factory the next day and told her supervisor that her headache recovered and she felt fine.

She smiled and walked five kilometers back and fro to work daily. She massaged her head more and more frequently.

"You haven't found another job?" Hayley couldn't help but ask her father and brother while looking at the soup which was boiling with black bread.

Her father said in frustration, "The economy is in a recession. Many places are retrenching. Even the harbor jobs are sporadic. I could only get three soli and seven pence a week."

Hayley sighed and fell into her usual silence. However, she hid her left hand that was twitching suddenly.

On the second day, she walked to work again. The sun was shining brightly, and the street grew busier and busier with pedestrians.

Suddenly, she started convulsing all over.

She fell to the side of the road, foam spewing out of her mouth.

She looked up into the sky and her gaze turned into a blur. She saw people walking past and others getting close. She saw a carriage pass by with the Deweyville family emblem with a white dove with its spread wings as if ready to take off.

She tried hard to open her mouth, but she couldn't make a sound.

So, she didn't say a thing, quiet as ever.

But the difference this time was that she was dead.

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CHAPTER 91
SOLUTION

The scenery started to distort, turning illusory and began to fade away.

After Klein left his dreamlike state, his vision adapted to the darkness in the room.

He knew that with one pound and ten soli, which was thirty soli a week, Benson didn't have an easy time supporting the family according to the standards of an average family.

He had thought that the majority of workers earned twenty soli a week.

He had once heard Melissa remark that Lower Street of Iron Cross Street had five, seven, or even ten families squeezing into the same room.

He also learned from Benson that as a result of the situation in the Southern Continent, the kingdom's economy was in a recession for the past few months.

He knew that a maid, with board and lodging provided, could earn between three soli and sixpence to six soli a week.

Klein extended his hand and pinched his glabella. He was silent for a long time, until Sir Deweyville asked, "Officer, aren't you going to say anything? The psychiatrists I went to would always speak to me and ask questions in such a situation.

"However, I must say that I feel at peace. I almost fell asleep. I haven't heard any moans or cries yet.

"How did you do it?"

Klein leaned back in the rocking chair. Instead of providing an answer, he asked with a gentle tone, "Sir, do you know about lead poisoning? Do you know about the dangers of lead?"

Deweyville fell silent for a few seconds. "I did not know about it in the past, but I do now. Are you telling me that my psychological illness stems from my guilt—my guilt toward the female lead and porcelain factory workers?"

Without waiting for Klein to answer, he continued just like he always had—in his position of power during a negotiation.

"Yes, I did feel guilty about this in the past, but I did compensate them. At my lead and porcelain factories, the workers do not earn less than other workers in the same industry. In Backlund, lead and porcelain workers are paid no more than eight soli a week, but I pay them ten, sometimes even more.

"Heh, many people criticize me for breaking ranks since it makes it hard for them to recruit workers. If not for the repeal of the Grain Act that made many farmers bankrupt, sending them to the cities, they would have had to raise their wages just like I did.

"Furthermore, I've also informed the supervisor of the factories to make sure that those with repeated headaches and blurry vision are to leave the areas where they are exposed to lead. If their illness is really severe, then they can even ask for help at my charity foundation.

"I think I have done enough."

Klein spoke without a ripple of emotion in his voice, "Sir, at times, you cannot imagine how important a salary is to a poor person. Simply losing work for a week or two can result in an irreversible loss to their family, a loss that would cause tremendous grief."

He paused before saying, "I am curious, why wouldn't a kind person like you install equipment that can protect against dust and lead poisoning in your factories?"

Deweyville looked at the ceiling and laughed ruefully.

"That would make my costs too high for me to bear. I would no longer be able to compete with other lead and porcelain companies. I no longer pay too much attention to my profits in these areas of my business. In fact, I am even willing to fork out some money. But what's the point of keeping the business if I have to keep doing that? That can only help a number of workers and not become a standard in the industry or effect change on other factories.

"That would merely result in me forking out money to support the workers. I heard that some factories even secretly hire slaves to minimize costs."

Klein crossed his hands and said after a moment of silence, "Sir, the root of your psychological illness comes from the buildup of guilt, despite you believing that the guilt has faded and disappeared over time. It wouldn't have any visible effects under normal circumstances, but there was something that triggered you and set off all the problems at once."

"Something that triggered me? I'm not aware of such a thing," Deweyville said puzzled, but with conviction.

Klein allowed the chair to rock gently as he explained with a gentle tone, "You did fall asleep for a few minutes just now, and you told me something."

"Hypnosis?" Deweyville made a guess as he usually did.

Klein did not give a direct reply and instead said, "You once saw a girl dying on her way to work while you were on your carriage. She had died because of lead poisoning. She was one of your workers who glazed porcelain while she was still alive."

Deweyville rubbed his temples, speechless before saying somewhat doubtful, "I think that happened once… but I can't remember it clearly…”

His prolonged insomnia had left him in a poor mental state. He could only faintly recall seeing such a scene.

He thought for a moment, but gave up taxing his brain. Instead, he asked, "What was that worker's name?

"Well, what I meant was, what should I do to cure my psychological illness?"

Klein replied immediately, "Two things."

"First, the worker that died by the side of the road was called Hayley Walker. That was what you told me. She was the most direct trigger, so you have to find her parents and give them more compensation.

"Second, spread information about the dangers of lead in the newspapers and magazines. Allow your charity foundation to help more workers who suffered from the damage. If you succeed in becoming a member of parliament, push for enacting laws in this domain."

Deweyville sat up slowly and laughed in a self-deprecating manner.

"I will do all of the rest, but to enact a law, heh— I think it's impossible since there is still competition from nations beyond our country. Setting up such a law would just slip the entire industry in the country into a crisis. Factories would become bankrupt one by one, and many workers would lose their jobs. Organizations that help the poor cannot save that many people."

He slowly got off the bed and adjusted his collar. He then looked at Klein and said, "Hayley Walker, right? I'll immediately get Cullen to retrieve information about her from the porcelain company and find her parents. Officer, please wait with me and continuously evaluate my mental state."

"Alright." Klein stood up slowly and smoothed his black-and-white checkered police uniform.

…

At eleven in the morning in the living room of Deweyville.

Klein sat on the sofa in silence as he looked at the man and woman being guided into the house by Butler Cullen.

The two guests had blemished skin, wrinkles already woven into their faces. The man had a slight hunch while the woman had a mole under her eyelid.

They looked nearly identical to what Klein had seen through Hayley, just older and more haggard. They were so skinny that they were almost all bone. Their clothes were old and ragged. Klein even learned that they couldn't continue living on Lower Street of Iron Cross Streets any further.

Sob…

Klein sensed an icy wind start to spiral through his spiritual perception.

He pinched his glabella and shot a glance toward Sir Deweyville. It was unknown when a faint white, translucent, contorted figure had appeared behind him.

"Good-good morning, Honorable Sir." Hayley's parents were unusually polite.

Deweyville rubbed his forehead and asked, "Are the both of you Hayley Walker's parents? Doesn't she also have a brother and a two-year-old sister?"

Hayley's mother answered in fear, "Her-her brother broke his leg at the harbor sometime back. We got him to take care of his sister at home."

Deweyville remained silent for a few seconds before he sighed.

"My deepest condolences for what happened to Hayley."

Upon hearing that, the eyes of Hayley's parents immediately turned red. They opened their mouths and said over each other, "Thank-thank you for your goodwill.

"The police told us-told us, that Hayley died from lead poisoning. That's the term, right? Oh, my poor child, she was only seventeen. She was always so quiet, so determined.

"You had sent someone to visit her before and sponsored her burial. She is buried at the Raphael Cemetery."

Deweyville glanced at Klein and changed his sitting posture. He leaned forward and said with a serious tone, "That was actually an oversight of ours. I have to apologize."

"I have considered that I need to compensate you, to compensate Hayley. Her weekly salary was ten soli, was it not? One year would be five hundred and twenty soli, or twenty-six pounds. Let's assume that she could have worked for another ten years.

"Cullen, give Hayley's parents three hundred pounds."

"Three-three hundred pounds?" Hayley's parents were dumbfounded.

They never had more than one pound of savings, even at their richest!

It wasn't only them who were dazed. Even the expressions of the bodyguards and maids in the room were also all that of shock and envy. Even Sergeant Gate couldn't help but draw in a deep breath—his weekly salary was only two pounds and among his subordinates, only one chevroned constable earned one pound a week.

Amidst the silence, Butler Cullen walked out of the study and held a bulging sack.

He opened the sack and revealed stacks of cash, some one pound, some five pounds, but mostly made up of one or five soli.

It was clear that Deweyville had made his subordinates receive "change" from the bank earlier.

"It's an expression of Sir Deweyville's goodwill," Cullen handed the sack over to Hayley's parents after receiving confirmation from his master.

Hayley's parents took the sack and rubbed their eyes, looking at it in disbelief.

"No, this-this is too generous, we cannot accept this," they said as they held the sack tightly.

Deweyville said in a deep voice, "This is what Hayley deserves."

"Y-you truly are a noble, charitable knight!" Hayley's parents bowed repeatedly in agitation.

They had smiles on their faces, smiles that they couldn't repress.

They praised the knight repeatedly, repeating the same few adjectives they knew. They kept insisting that Hayley would be grateful towards him in heaven.

"Cullen, send them home. Oh, take them to the bank first," Deweyville heaved a sigh of relief and instructed his butler.

Hayley's parents hugged the sack tightly and walked toward the door quickly without stopping.

Klein saw the faint translucent figure behind Sir Deweyville attempt to extend its hands towards them, hoping to leave with them, but the parents' smiles were abnormally radiant. They didn't turn back.

That figure turned fainter and, soon, vanished completely.

Klein also sensed that the icy feeling in the guest hall had instantly returned to normal.

From beginning to end, all he did was sit there silently, not expressing his opinion.

"Officer, I feel much better. Now can you tell me why my butler, servants, and bodyguards could also hear the cries and moans? This shouldn't just be solely a psychological illness of mine, right?" Deweyville looked at him curiously.

Inspector Tolle, who knew the underlying truth, instantly became nervous.

Klein replied without much expression, "In psychology, we call this phenomenon—mass hysteria."

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CHAPTER 92
PSYCHOLOGICAL EXPERT

"Mass hysteria?" Sir Deweyville, who had met many psychiatrists recently, ruminated over the term Klein had said.

Despite their curiosity, his butler, bodyguards, and servants didn't make a single sound since they had not been given permission by him.

As for Sergeant Gate, he looked towards Klein doubtfully as if he had never heard of that concept.

Klein controlled his habit of tapping the armrest with his fingertips and calmly explained, "Humans can be fooled easily by their sensory organs. Mass hysteria is a kind of psychogenic illness that is a result of tense nerves and other factors amongst a group of individuals as they influence each other."

The jargon he spewed out confused Sir Deweyville, Sergeant Gate, and the rest, causing them to subconsciously opt to believe him.

"Let me give a simple example of this; this was one of the cases that I previously dealt with, one man held a dinner banquet and invited 35 guests. Midway, he suddenly felt disgusted and puked. After that, he even had severe diarrhea. After a couple times, he began to believe that he had gotten food poisoning. He shared his speculation with the other guests on the way to the hospital.

"In the next two hours, there were more than 30 guests that had diarrhea amongst the 35 guests, with 26 of them experiencing nausea. They flooded the entire emergency room of the hospital.

"The doctors went through a detailed examination and performed cross checks, and they concluded that the very first man didn't have food poisoning at all. Instead, it was a result of stomach inflammation caused by the change of weather and cold liquor.

"The most surprising fact was that none of the guests who went to the hospital had food poisoning. In fact, not a single one of them was sick.

"That is mass hysteria."

Deweyville nodded slightly and marveled, "I understand now. Humans do lie to themselves easily. It's no wonder that Emperor Roselle once said that a lie would become reality once it was repeated a hundred times.

"Officer, how may I address you? You are the most professional psychiatrist I have ever met."

"Inspector Moretti." Klein pointed at his epaulet and said, "Sir, your troubles have been resolved temporarily for now. You can try to sleep now while I determine if there are any other problems. If you are able to sleep well, please allow us to bid farewell ahead of time instead of waiting for you to wake up."

"Alright." Deweyville massaged his forehead, took his cane, and walked upstairs to his bedroom.

Half an hour later, a police carriage left the fountain at the door of Deweyville's residence.

When Sergeant Gate got off on the way and returned to his police station, Inspector Tolle looked towards Klein. He complimented in jest, "Even I believed that you were a real psychological expert…”

Before he finished his sentence, he saw the young man in a black-and-white checkered uniform looking expressionless. His eyes were deep and serene

as he forced a smirk on his face and said, "I only had some experience with it in the past."

Inspector Tolle fell silent until the carriage arrived outside 36 Zouteland Street.

"Thank you for your assistance, allowing Sir Deweyville to be finally free from his problems and be able to find sleep again." He extended his hand and shook Klein's hand. "Thank Dunn on my behalf."

Klein nodded slightly and said, "Alright."

He went up the stairs and returned to the Blackthorn Security Company. He knocked and entered the captain's office.

"Done?" Dunn was waiting for his lunch.

"Done." Klein massaged his forehead, and kept his reply short and simple. "The root of the problem stemmed from the lead and porcelain factory under Sir Deweyville. From the moment they were established to this day, too many deaths have been caused by lead poisoning. And every accident left Sir Deweyville with some resentful spirituality."

"Generally speaking, that wouldn't bring too big of a problem. That might cause nightmares, at the most." Dunn had experienced similar cases with his plethora of experience.

Klein nodded slightly and said, "Yes, that's usually the case. But, unfortunately, Sir Deweyville encountered a female worker who died of lead poisoning on the streets. She collapsed by the side of the street and happened to catch a glimpse of the Deweyville's family emblem. She also harbored intense indignation, worry, and desires. It was only when Sir Deweyville gave her parents, brother, and sister a compensation of three hundred pounds did her emotions dissipate."

"This is a societal problem. It isn't rare in the Age of Steam and Machinery." Dunn took out his smoking pipe, smelled the tobacco, and sighed. "Workers that make linen work in damp environments, and are generally diagnosed with bronchitis and joint related ailments. As for factories with serious powder and dust issues, even if the dust isn't poisonous, it can still accumulate into lung problems… Sigh… We don't have to talk about this. As the kingdom develops, I believe these problems will be resolved. Klein, let's find a restaurant tonight to celebrate you becoming an official member, alright?"

Klein thought for a moment before saying, "How about tomorrow… Captain, I have used Spirit Vision for an extended period of time today and also used dream divination to directly interact with those resentments. I'm feeling especially drained. I want to return home in the afternoon to get some rest. Would that be okay? Oh, then I'll head over to the Divination Club at about four or five in the afternoon to see how the club members are reacting to news of Hanass Vincent's sudden death."

"No problem, that's only necessary." Dunn chuckled. "Tomorrow night it is. Let's do it at Old Will's Restaurant next door. I'll get Rozanne to make a reservation."

Klein took off his police peak cap and stood up to salute him.

"Thank you, Captain. See you tomorrow."

Dunn lifted his hand and said, "Hold on, did you mention that Sir Deweyville gave the female worker's parents a compensation of three hundred pounds?"

"Yes." Klein nodded and immediately understood the reason why the captain had mentioned it. "You are worried that they will get into trouble because of their wealth?"

Dunn sighed.

"I've seen many similar situations in the past. Pass me their address, I'll ask Kenley to arrange for them to leave Tingen for another city, to start life anew."

"Alright," Klein replied in a deep voice.

With all of that done, he left Dunn's office and entered the break room diagonally opposite. He changed into his original suit and left the police uniform in his locker.

Klein took the public carriage back to Daffodil Street in silence. He took off his coat and top hat. He then heated up the leftovers from last night and ate them with the last piece of wheat bread to fill his stomach.

Then, he went to the second floor, hung his clothes, and slumped into bed.

When he woke up, the pocket watch showed that it was already ten past two in the afternoon. The sun was hanging high up in the sky and the sunlight shone through the clouds.

Underneath the golden splendor, Klein stood next to his desk and looked out the oriel window. He watched the pedestrians in old ragged clothing as they entered or left Iron Cross Street.

Phew… He let out a breath slowly, finally overcoming his low spirits.

Every journey had to be taken one step at a time. Likewise, his Sequence needed to be advanced one level at a time. Everything worked like that.

He shook his head and sat down. He started concluding and reorganizing his encounter over the last week, so as to reinforce the important points in his mind to prevent himself from forgetting them.

Five minutes before three in the afternoon.

Above a blurry, boundless, grayish-white, silent gray fog stood a lofty palace. An ancient mottled bronze table sat there quietly.

On the seat of honor at the long table sat a man already engulfed by the thick gray fog.

Klein leaned against the back of the chair and contemplated. He suddenly extended his hand and tapped on the crimson stars that represented Justice and The Hanged Man.

…

Backlund, Empress Borough.

Audrey lifted her dress as she quickly walked towards her bedroom.

Suddenly, she felt something and looked sideways at the shadow sitting on the balcony. As expected, she saw her golden retriever, Susie, who was sitting there in silence, observing her as always.

Audrey sighed and drew a crimson moon on her chest. She then got closer and looked down at her golden retriever from a commanding position.

"Susie, that's not right. This is peeping. A Spectator has to observe in an open manner."

The golden retriever lifted its head to look at its owner and shook its tail.

After nagging her dog, Audrey didn't delay any further and continued walking towards her bedroom again.

In the few seconds of opening and closing the door, she suddenly had a weird idea.

"I wonder if Mr. Fool would allow Susie to enter that mysterious space. Then, there would be four members in the Tarot Gathering! And all of them

would be Beyonders!

"No way, Susie can't talk. If they were to let her express her opinion and share her thoughts, what would she do? Woof woof woof? Howl howl? Eww, why am I mimicking a dog's bark here…

"Just imagining such a scene feels really strange. A mysterious and solemn gathering with the sudden barking of a dog… Mr. Fool would definitely kick us out of the Tarot Gathering directly…"

Audrey locked the door and sat by the side of her bed. She took out a piece of old yellowish-brown paper from underneath her pillow.

She read it repeatedly and entered her Spectator state.

…

In a particular area of the Sonia Sea, an old sailboat which was in pursuit of the Listener had already left the Rorsted Archipelago.

Seafarer Alger Wilson was worried that the wall clock's machinery would malfunction, so he entered the captain's cabin about half an hour earlier in case he had misjudged the time which would cause his subordinates to see him getting pulled into the Tarot Gathering.

In front of him was a glass of nearly transparent liquor. The rich aroma swirled strand after strand into his nostrils.

Alger trembled once again when he thought of the impending Gathering, the boundless fog that presented itself in front of him in the hotel's corridor, and the mysterious Fool who sat in the middle of the gray fog.

He lifted his glass and took a gulp, using the burning sensation in his throat to ease the emotions that had stirred within him.

Very soon, he restored his calm. He was as calm and stoic as he always was.

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CHAPTER 93
NEW DIARY PAGE

Above the gray fog, gigantic stone columns held up a majestic divine hall.

Two dark red blobs extended out into faint human figures by the side of the ancient mottled bronze table.

"Good afternoon, Mr. Fool." Augmented with a blurry effect, Audrey greeted him with a bow and smiled. "It is unfortunate that there is no wine here; otherwise, we could have a toast to your successful trial."

She was referring to the ritualistic magic.

"You are more powerful than we imagined," Alger Wilson praised as well.

Klein was surrounded by the thick fog as usual. He pressed down with his right arm and spoke with his normal tone, replying as though it was natural.

"Great, this means that we are on the path of excellence. If you have any matters to tend to that leave you unable to attend the gathering on Mondays, conduct the ritual and inform me. All you have to do is change the line in the incantation 'I pray for a good dream' with the reason."

"Alright," Audrey quickly agreed. "Mr. Fool, I obtained another page of Emperor Roselle's diary. I believe I still owe you one page."

"I was away from land this week and haven't found any new pages." Alger placed his right hand near his chest and bowed in apology.

"No matter. I expected my request to take a long time." Klein leaned back into his chair and tapped the armrest with his index finger. He looked at Miss Justice and said, "You can express the contents of the diary now."

Audrey bowed slightly and said, "As you wish."

A pen suddenly appeared before her. She recalled the symbols that she had memorized and tried her best to transcribe them.

In seconds, she saw that the goatskin was already filled with content. The strange symbols neatly covered the entire page.

After checking the contents, she put down the fountain pen and said, "It's done."

Klein raised his hand and the goatskin parchment appeared in his palm.

Shifting his gaze down, he started reading without emotion.

"July 9th. I suddenly thought of an interesting question. Since the Sequence pathways are also called the 'Blessings of The Divinities' or 'Paths of The Dive', then why would the stone slate that records the completed twenty-two Sequence pathways be called the 'Blasphemy Slate'. Blasphemy, what an interesting term… Just who is the one blasphemed?

"And who created the Blasphemy Slate? How could that person hold all of the Sequence pathways? Just what other information was on the stone? I really want to see it…

"July 12th. I've realized another fact today. The Sealed Artifacts are an important component of a church's overall strength, even though some of the Sealed Artifacts are very, very dangerous. Among the seven churches, the God of Craftsmanship wields the least number of Sealed Artifacts which are also relatively less dangerous… Did I join an organization without a future? No, I should think of it this way; only a blank piece of paper can

produce a good painting. A weak organization is the best place for me to display my abilities!

"July 14th. I saw that mysterious Mr. Zaratul again. I never expected him to be the leader of an ancient organization, the Secret Order!"

Klein's pupils constricted when he read this. He nearly revealed an unnatural expression.

The Zaratul family only had a certain connection with the Secret Order in the notes of the Church of the Evernight Goddess. But now, he learned from Emperor Roselle that the mysterious Mr. Zaratul was further determined to be the leader of the Secret Order.

From the looks of it, it is an unquestionable fact that the Secret Order holds the Seer Sequence pathway…

While Klein was reading the diary, Audrey looked over and began observing him out of habit.

However, her field of vision was completely obscured by the thick fog.

Momentarily taken aback, Audrey snapped back to her senses and turned her head frantically to look at the other illusory dark red star.

I was too reckless, too insolent, too foolish in trying to observe Mr. Fool… I was lucky, lucky that he isn't angry. Audrey stuck out her tongue secretly and pretended to admire the scenery. She was just short of humming a lively tune.

Alger sat silently, his gaze never leaving the long bronze table. He knew his place, as if he was in the presence of a true god.

Klein collected himself and scanned the last portion of the diary.

"After learning that I had become a Savant, Mr. Zaratul mentioned that I had chosen a difficult, yet relatively safe path. I asked him why that was the case, but all he did was smile before telling me that the Sequence pathway contains secrets beyond my imagination. I couldn't help but ask him which Sequence pathway he selected. He told me that his Sequence 9 was Seer.

"I intentionally mocked him and asked if every Seer only disclosed half-truths, never explaining things more clearly. Furthermore, he was clearly a powerful High-Sequence Beyonder. There was no need for him to continue acting as a Seer!

"Mr. Zaratul told me that it was a habit he adopted from back when he was a Seer, and that this was a method that could pique my curiosity and make me cooperate with him. He hoped that I could help him steal a dangerous Sealed Artifact from the Church of the God of Craftsmanship, a relic of the Antigonus family.

"Clearly, this must wait until I become a core member of the Church of the God of Craftsmanship. I asked Mr. Zaratul how long it would take to digest the potion if I used the acting method, and what standards I should use to determine if I had digested it completely.

"He told me that for the lower Sequences, it would only take half a year to digest the potion as long as one strictly used the acting method. In fact, in the fastest case, it might only take a month. And standard measure for progress was simple; every Beyonder would sense it immediately once the potion was completely digested. It is what it is.

"I asked him for more details, but he merely smiled at me.

"To hell with his smiles, I'll beat up every Seer I see when I become a High-Sequence Beyonder!"

…*Rest in peace, Emperor*… Klein read the diary several times before looking at Justice and The Hanged Man again.

"Sorry for the wait."

"It is our honor." Audrey was still shocked, forgetting that she was a Spectator.

She looked at The Hanged Man and organized her words.

"Where can I find the Psychology Alchemists?"

Psychology Alchemists… Klein suddenly recalled the man buying supplementary ingredients for the Spectator potion at the Tingen underground market.

Perhaps he was a member of the Psychology Alchemists?

Just as Klein was considering how to get closer to that man, The Hanged Man, Alger Wilson shook his head and said, "Miss Justice, firstly, I don't have a clue. Secondly, I don't think there's any rush in seeking out the Psychology Alchemists. What you should focus on now is completely digesting the Spectator potion."

Audrey glanced at The Fool and noticed that he didn't have any intention of adding to the conversation. She nodded in disappointment and said, "All I want is to have plenty of time to prepare so that I can approach them more naturally. Alright, then when can I digest the Spectator potion and stop acting? Is there a standard that indicates when I can? I'm almost at the point where I no longer feel frustrated, nor do I hear the constant murmuring anymore."

Alger looked at The Fool in the fog but saw that he didn't have any intention of speaking. He then deliberated before saying, "If you don't use the acting method, the typical rule of thumb is to wait three years and confirm that you no longer feel restless or receive any auditory or visual illusions. There is one simple test to determine when you can. That method is to exhaust your body to its limit. If you still don't hear any maniacal

murmurings or see any strange things at that point, that would mean that you're ready to advance."

"With regards to the acting method, I have also just come into contact with it. It feels good, so I don't think it'll take three years."

That wasn't useful at all… Three years, that's too long… Audrey criticized inwardly.

She had just thought about this when she heard an armrest being tapped.

Audrey froze, then turned her head in joy. She saw The Fool tapping on the edge of the long table.

Alger sat straighter, waiting for The Fool to speak.

Klein said in his normal tone, "For Low-Sequence Beyonders, as long as you strictly stick to acting, you should be able to digest the medicine in half a year. It's even possible to do it in a month."

He looked at Justice and added, "As for the signs of digestion, you'll know it when it comes. It doesn't need to be taught."

"One month… Great! Thank you, Mr. Fool!" Audrey exclaimed while brimming with joy.

Miss Justice, don't think that you are the chosen one. The key point is half a year… Klein lifted his right hand and placed it beside his lips.

"Half a year…" Alger repeated softly.

Audrey sensed joy, relief, and intense doubt in his tone.

What is he suspicious about? Audrey thought as she asked, "Mr. Fool, have you considered adding more members?"

Klein leaned back casually. He had long prepared an answer.

"This started as a trial, so I didn't spend much time thinking about extending our meetings.

"But now, as a regular gathering, we must choose our members carefully. Secrecy is our motto."

Audrey nodded gently and said, "That is to say that we have to follow a process of observation, recommendation, and testing process. Yes, a process."

"You can interpret it that way," Klein affirmed.

In his mind he was thinking about how he could inquire about the Secret Order and the Clown potion.

How can I ask questions in a way that befits my status? Klein was placed in a difficult spot.

At that moment, realizing that Justice temporarily had nothing else to say, Alger took the initiative to speak, "I've heard that a Listener from the Aurora Order is searching for traces of the True Creator, which is the holy residence they advocate."

"True Creator?" Audrey asked, puzzled.

"It is an ancient entity worshiped by numerous secret organizations and cults. They believe that the Creator hasn't completely perished. The Core he left behind is the True Creator." Alger gave a rough explanation. "Since the Fifth Epoch, the True Creator has appeared in many forms, such as The Hanged Giant or the Eye behind the Shadow Curtains. Heh heh, many people believe that Emperor Roselle referenced the imagery of the True Creator when he was creating the tarot cards; hence, there exists the card of The Hanged Man."

At this point, he looked at Klein and said, "Mr. Fool, there's nothing with what I said, right?"

Is he trying to probe for my views on the True Creator? Klein thought about the bloody man on the cross that the Captain saw in Hanass Vincent's dream and immediately had an idea.

Doesn't both the hanging and the shadows imply evil connotations?

Therefore, he chuckled and said, "I am more inclined to call him, the Fallen Creator."

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CHAPTER 94
HIDDEN SAGE

"The Fallen Creator… Fallen…” Alger ruminated over The Fool's words and fell deep in thought.

However, what struck Alger the most was The Fool's relaxed, natural, and nonchalant attitude.

He acted as if they were equal!

If he hadn't experienced their previous ritual, Alger might have thought The Fool was merely bluffing, and building himself up to intimidate him and Justice. But now, he was of the opinion that even if The Fool was inferior to the True Creator, he was at least close to that level.

It's dangerous. It's also an opportunity… Alger muttered softly. He then spoke with a smile, "Mr. Fool, your description is indeed more appropriate. According to our observations, Beyonders who believed in the True Creator, no—the Fallen Creator, have a higher probability of losing control. The rest of them are mostly psychopaths."

That's something that the Nighthawks' intelligence mentioned as well… And the so-called 'psychopaths' didn't lose their sanity; instead, their ideologies become twisted… Klein maintained his seated posture but didn't continue with the conversation.

He was still considering how to inquire about the Secret Order and Clown potion, but he couldn't figure out a way of asking the questions in a way that fit with his persona.

It's such a pity that the Gathering is still so different from an Internet forum. Otherwise, I could create another smurf account to join the Gathering, and that account would be in charge of asking questions that are inconvenient for me to ask… Perhaps, one day, I'll learn mirror-related magic and give it a try. For example, I can make half the members here my smurf accounts…

There are twenty-two chairs here, and there are twenty-two cards in the tarot deck. That matches up perfectly. But when I 'created' this divine hall, I didn't even name myself 'The Fool' or have any intention of forming a 'Tarot Club'. Hmm, do these symbolize the twenty-two different Sequence pathways?

I wanted a divine hall, so a divine hall appeared. If I wanted a smurf account, would I get a smurf account…

Upon seeing The Fool remain silently engulfed in the thick gray fog, Audrey asked both wistfully and curiously, "That sounds scary. Mr. Hanged Man, could you share, in detail, information about each, and every mysterious organization? And also the matters regarding each secret cult? It's hard for me to come into contact with them during my daily life. I can only understand them through the both of you. I'm willing to pay for it. May I know what you'd like in return?"

That's a great question! Miss Justice, you're playing the role of my smurf account to a certain extent… This way, The Hanged Man will definitely bring up the Secret Order… You're the best! Klein's mind stirred when he heard that, but he didn't let his emotions show through his expression or movements.

Alger thought for a moment before saying, "I need money—a thousand pounds. It'd be best if they weren't bills marked by a serial number. Or maybe gemstones that have just been unearthed. Price them according to the Backlund Jewelry Exchange's monthly average price."

A thousand pounds? That's a huge sum of money. It could be used to buy a house in a high-class street in Tingen City! Not everyone would have that

available immediately… Captain might have an annual salary like that, I guess? Hayley's death compensation was only three hundred pounds… Although Miss Justice is a noble, she obviously hasn't inherited her family's wealth yet, and she'll only be receiving some sort of annual allowance… Hmm, it's no wonder that The Hanged Man stated that it could be paid via gemstones… Klein was very sensitive towards monetary figures. Luckily, he was blanketed in thick fog.

For a single lady or madam, two thousand pounds could let her live a decent life!

If two thousand pounds were invested, the investment could reliably produce an annual return of about a hundred pounds.

"A thousand pounds?" Audrey said, sounding shocked. She then replied happily, "No problem, do I send it to the previous address?"

Judging by Miss Justice's tone, she finds it very cheap? Klein didn't look over.

Alger was quiet for a good twenty seconds before he said, "Yes, send it to the Warrior & Sea Bar at Pelican Street, in the White Rose Borough of Pritz Harbor. Tell the boss, Williams, that it's what the 'Captain' wants.

"Alright." Audrey leaned back and posed in a Spectator-like manner. "Mr. Hanged Man, you can start now."

Alger looked at The Fool, deliberated for a moment before saying slowly, "Let's start from the Moses Ascetic Order. It is the earliest hidden organization. Of course, many think that the earliest hidden organizations are the Church of the Evernight Goddess, the Church of Mother Earth, and the Church of the God of Combat.

"These people must be from the Church of the Lord of Storms, the Church of the Eternal Blazing Sun, or the Church of the God of Knowledge and Wisdom," Audrey refuted sulkily.

The Church of the Goddess is the earliest hidden organization? That was the first time Klein had heard of such a claim.

What exactly happened in the Fourth Epoch or the Third Epoch?

Alger smiled and said, "The truth is buried in ancient history. Only one thing is certain: no one has ever said that the Church of the Lord of Storms, the Church of the Eternal Blazing Sun, or the Church of the God of Knowledge and Wisdom were once hidden organizations.

"Alright, let's save some time and return to main topic. The Moses Ascetic Order was first established by a few humans that had read the Blasphemy Slate. They believed in an non-anthropomorphic god, called 'the Hidden Sage'."

"The description is that of a god, but it is more of an ideology, a natural law. For example, all objects are numeric. The Hidden Sage is an embodiment of Spirit Numerology. Or that knowledge is supreme, and the Hidden Sage is knowledge itself. Hence, the original Moses Ascetic Order was a very respectable organization, and it maintained a good relationship with the other major churches.

"The members of the organization led ascetic lives to resist losing control and to resolve the effects of the Remnant potion. They strictly kept their order's secrets, and they upheld moral and religious precepts. They believe that humans continuously reincarnate after death…

"The Sequence 9 that they grasp is called Mystery Pryer… The word 'Warlock' was also spread from that organization."

Audrey listened to The Hanged Man's description carefully and asked sharply, "You said that the Moses Ascetic Order used to be a respectable organization. Are they not one anymore?"

Alger nodded his head indiscernibly.

"Yes, they have fallen into corruption and are now an evil organization."

"Why? I find their beliefs very good and very normal," Audrey expressed her confusion.

That was Klein's confusion too. The information that he could get at his security clearance didn't provide the reason for the Moses Ascetic Order's fall from grace.

Alger looked at the unfathomable Fool and tersely agreed.

"I am not sure of the real reason. It might be because it has been buried by history. However, I have heard one terrifying explanation.

"In that story, the main reason why the Moses Ascetic Order fell into corruption was because the god that they believed in, the Hidden Sage, had come to life!

"He became the personification of an evil god!"

"Came to life? This… how?" Audrey found it unimaginable as she replied with an incredulous tone.

Without realizing it, she had exited from her Spectator state.

It's like a horror story, but the ghost is even a god… Klein's heart stirred with a surge of emotions as well.

"I'm sorry, no one knows the answer." Alger had originally wanted to casually say, "Maybe Mr. Fool would know," but he held back the urge.

He had already teetered on the borders of danger once.

In The Book of Storms 5:7, there was a saying that Alger remembered clearly, which was: "Do not test God!"

Audrey calmed herself down and didn't press for more answers. She gestured for him to continue.

Klein maintained his seated posture and his silence, validating The Hanged Man's descriptions with his own understanding.

Finally, he realized that there were four points that he needed to take note of.

First, the Demoness Sect was also known as the Demoness Family in the Fourth Epoch. Back then, they had very few members, and their beliefs were passed down through their bloodlines. Plus, they would kill the fathers of their children and abandon the baby boys. Hence, all the members were female. Of course, that was all from Alger's description, and there was no way to verify it at the moment.

Second, the Numinous Episcopate that believed in Death and the Rose School of Thought that liked bloody sacrificial worship ceremonies both originated in the Southern Continent. After the colonial era came, they almost vanished under attacks by the seven churches. But as such, they began spreading to the Northern Continent.

Third, the current Psychology Alchemists was similar to the earlier Moses Ascetic Order. They believed in an non-anthropomorphic existence and believed that the human spirit could change everything.

Fourth, the Secret Order had the lowest activity level among all the other hidden organizations. Thus, they were the most unknown. Every time they appeared, they seem to be after something or looking for something.

What are they after or looking for? Klein suddenly recalled the diary which he had read earlier: The leader of the Secret Order, Zaratul, cooperated with the Roselle. His goal was to get something left behind by the Antigonus family.

Their appearance that time was to look for the lost notebook, the Antigonus family notebook… Klein narrowed his eyes slightly and felt that he had apparently found the key reason for the Secret Order's actions.

They are after the things that the Antigonus family left behind!

Klein suppressed his urge to tap the edge of the table as his thoughts appeared one after another.

Oh, they were looking for remnant traces the Antigonus family left behind?

Then must I direct my focus onto these areas to obtain the Clown potion formula from the Secret Order?

After a further exchange of information, Klein announced the end of the Gathering.

"By your will." Audrey and Alger stood up together.

Cutting off the connections, he saw both their figures shatter and disappear. Klein rubbed his glabella and attempted conjuring a smurf account with his mind.

As he thought, a figure appeared at the furthest end of the long bronze table. That figure was wearing a black tuxedo, a silk top hat, and a dull expression. His actions were clumsy and inarticulate. Even though he was engulfed in gray fog, it was obvious that something was wrong with him.

That won't do… Klein experimented a few more times before sighing and dismissing the idea of creating a smurf account.

He attempted other things too. He continued to sit above the gray fog in the seat of honor at the long bronze table. He considered what Audrey had said, and he cast his gaze curiously at the illusory crimson stars.

After a moment of silence, Klein started to pray as a form of feedback instead of establishing contact with those stars.

Amidst the tranquility and silence, he didn't receive any feedback from the ten plus crimson stars nearby.

In order to receive feedback, I need to pull someone above the gray fog before I can reply? Klein nodded as he thought, feeling somewhat disappointed.

He didn't want to violate someone else's will and forcefully pull them into this mysterious space.

Hmm… Klein was just getting ready to leave, but he habitually touched a nearby illusory crimson star.

Just then, he suddenly felt that there was a faint and insignificant prayer deep inside the crimson star!

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CHAPTER 95
THE SUPPLICANT

"A prayer?"

Klein's mind stirred as he used the same method he used back when he spied on The Hanged Man. He allowed his spirituality to spread outward and touch the crimson blob.

A hazy and contorted image appeared within his sight. He could faintly see a blond teen kneeling on the ground, facing a pure crystal ball.

That teenager was dressed in a tight-fitting black outfit, with a style very different from the contemporary styles of the Loen Kingdom. It was more congruent with the traditional clothing of the Feysac Empire and the Intis Republic that Klein had seen from reading magazines.

The area surrounding the teenager was dark and had old furniture. From time to time, the room would be illuminated, but Klein couldn't hear the roaring thunder or the pattering of rain.

In the image, the teenager had his hands on his forehead, fingers crossed. He bowed forward, continually praying for something. His thick accent buzzed in Klein's ears.

Klein listened attentively but discovered an awkward fact.

He couldn't understand what the other party was saying. It was a language that he had never come across in his life!

…To think that I cannot understand a foreign language even though I am the mysterious ruler of this world above the gray fog… Klein gave a self-deprecating laugh. He indignantly tried listening in once again in a manner more attentive than when he had to do English listening comprehension tests back on Earth.

As he was listening to the prayers, he gradually discovered something.

Even though he had never learned the language the young man was speaking, he found that it had similarities to Ancient Feysac!

Father… Mother… Those are likely the meanings of those two terms, right? It is quite similar to Ancient Feysac, but not without its differences… Klein creased his brows and slipped into deep thought. *Ancient Feysac was a common language in the Fourth Epoch. It is also the root language of all the contemporary languages of this era. Furthermore, it is still evolving… I cannot confirm it right now…*

He listened to it over and over again, eliminating the possibility of the language being a modern language like Loen, Feysac, or Intis.

Could it be a dialect of Ancient Feysac? Like the language used in the Antigonus family's diary? Klein tapped his finger on the edge of the bronze table and nodded indiscernibly. *There was another possibility. Ancient Feysac didn't spring into existence out of nothing, it was an evolution of Jotun, the language of the Giants… The Feysac Empire in the north has always claimed that its people possesses the bloodline of the Giants. Perhaps, this is ancient Jotun.*

At this point, Klein, who lacked knowledge, could only stop. He retracted his spirituality, without looking or listening in to that scene.

He had no intention of pulling the praying teen up above the fog immediately. He wanted to know what the young man was talking about first.

Of course, before that, he had to observe him frequently and conduct basic 'tests'.

Phew. Klein exhaled as he leaned back in his chair.

He enveloped himself with his spirituality and simulated the feeling of falling.

…

After "revising" Roselle's diary, Klein changed into his formal wear and left for the Divination Club.

He took the public transport despite his pay rise, but he did splurge to support Mrs. Wendy's business. He spent 1.5 pence on sweet iced tea to combat the afternoon heat.

When he arrived at Howes Street, Klein tossed the empty cup into the trash can and walked up to the second floor.

Before entering the building, he pinched his glabella and activated his Spirit Vision.

Klein had just entered the hall when he felt a faint, lingering grief.

The pretty receptionist Angelica was sitting there; her slightly red eyes looked unfocused.

"The grief will pass in time," Klein said with a gentle and firm tone as he walked toward Angelica.

Angelica looked up abruptly and muttered, clearly confused, "Mr. Moretti…”

She quickly came to her senses and asked, perturbed, "Y-you already know about Mr. Vincent?

"Oh right, I forgot that you're an exceptional fortune-teller."

Klein sighed appropriately.

"I only managed to divine a very rough outline of what transpired… Just what exactly happened to Mr. Vincent?"

"The boss told us that Mr. Vincent had a heart attack in his sleep and left this world peacefully." Angelica cried as she said, "He was so friendly, so polite, a true gentleman. He was the spiritual mentor of so many of our members. H-he was still so young…”

"I am sorry for bringing up this sad topic." Klein didn't console her any further. He walked toward the meeting room slowly.

Angelica took out a handkerchief and wiped her eyes and nose. She then looked at Klein's back and asked loudly, "Mr. Moretti, what would you like to drink?"

"Black tea." Klein preferred black tea to coffee, even though he found the black tea average.

In comparison, he preferred ginger beer and sweet iced tea. But as a gentleman, it was not right for him to act like a child in a formal setting…

As it was a Monday, there were only five or six members in the meeting room. Using his Spirit Vision, Klein saw that they each had different colors of emotion. Some were grieving, some more dull, some relatively unaffected.

They're all rather normal… normal reactions. Klein nodded slightly. He picked up his cane and found a spot in the room.

He was about to deactivate his Spirit Vision when he saw Angelica walk in and walk towards him.

"Mr. Moretti, a customer is looking for you. Well, it's the person from last time," the beautiful lady said with a hushed tone.

"You still remember him?" Klein asked with a smile.

Hmm, I wonder if he bought the magical medicine as I instructed… I wonder if he still needs surgery…

Angelica covered her mouth and said, "He was the only person who was willing to wait an entire afternoon in the club for a divination."

Klein grabbed his cane and stood up. He walked outside without saying anything.

In the reception area, he found the person who had sought his services the other day. He also noticed that the aura near his liver had regained its normal color. His overall health had also improved.

"Congratulations, the feeling of being healthy is wonderful indeed." Klein smiled as he extended a hand.

Bogda was first taken aback before he immediately extended both hands. He grabbed Klein's right palm tightly.

"Mr. Moretti, you truly can 'see' my condition!

"Yes, I have fully recovered! The doctors asked me questions over and over again, ran repeated tests on me, but they cannot believe that I recovered just like that!"

Upon hearing Bogda's ecstatic description, Klein calmly confirmed one thing—the apothecary at Lawson's Folk Herb Store was definitely a Beyonder!

He had seen how severe the man's liver disease had been. Fully healing him in the span of a few days was beyond the capability of herbs and medical

ability. The only possible explanation was that of a Beyonder!

Coupled with the incident with Glacis, there could only be one answer.

"I have to repent to God. To think that I would suspect you, suspect that miraculous doctor." Bogda refused to let go of Klein's hand. He continued on about his shame and gratitude, "…those ten pounds were truly money well spent. It bought my life back!"

What? Ten pounds? You spent ten pounds on the miraculous medicine? And you only gave me eight pence for my divination… Just eight pence… eight pence… pence… Klein was dazed just hearing about it.

At this moment, Bogda released his hands as he took a step back while beaming. He bowed reverently and said, "I am here today to express my gratitude. Thank you, Master Moretti. You showed me the way and saved my life.

"This was the outcome of you paying to have something divined. You need not thank anybody." Klein lifted his head slightly and looked at the divide between the wall and the ceiling. His answer fully expressed the vibes of a charlatan.

"You are a true seer," Bogda praised. "Next, I'll be heading to Vlad Street to thank that apothecary and buy the medicine he recommended."

"Haven't you already recovered?" Klein expertly hid the shock in his voice.

Bogda looked around, and laughed when he confirmed that the receptionist was not paying attention to them. He chuckled softly and said, "The doctor mentioned a concoction of herbs that includes mummy powder. It is a prescription that would satisfy both men and women… I didn't believe the doctor back then, but I have no more doubts now."

…There's a prescription like that? Klein suddenly felt that the apothecary was a cheat, and suspected if he had pushed the person in front of him into a

fiery pit of doom.

He observed Bogda and confirmed that there was no problem with his aura.

"Mummy powder?" Klein cautiously asked.

"Yes, mummy powder. I have asked a friend, he said that even the nobles of Backlund are maniacally looking for such an item. It's a powder made by grinding mummies which gives men peak performance in bed. Even though it's disgusting and sounds dirty, it truly is a material used by the aristocrats…" Bogda gave a detailed description. He had an eager desire in his eyes.

Mummies? Mummies made from corpses? Then grinding them to powder? Klein was dumbfounded. He nearly retched in front of Bogda.

Those nobles sure are hardcore… Just as he was about to advise Bogda against doing so, Glacis, who had suffered from a lung disease previously, stepped into the door and heard Bogda's description.

"Yes, it's very effective. I would recommend that you head to Lawson's Folk Herb Store at Vlad Street. Mr. Lawson's secret recipe is very effective!" Glacis took off his spectacles and leaned over with interest. He recommended with a hushed tone, "My experience was very, very, very perfect."

"You know of it too? I was just about to head to Mr. Lawson's Folk Herb Store." Bogda's worries vanished completely.

After a short conversation, he left the Divination Club in a hurry.

Up until then, Klein was still a little dumbfounded.

He waited till twenty past five in the afternoon before putting on his hat and picking up his black cane. He took a carriage down to Vlad Street,

intending to observe the apothecary named Lawson Darkweed before deciding if he should notify the captain or not.

…

18 Vlad Street.

Klein stood outside the herb store and saw the closed door, as well as a subletting notice.

…*Quite a wary man.*… he muttered silently.

Since this had happened, he no longer had to be troubled or perform any observations.

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CHAPTER 96
DALY'S GUESS

By the afternoon of the next day, Klein had fully recovered from any signs of exhaustion. He walked into the Blackthorn Security Company with steady footsteps.

"Good morning, Klein. The weather is so cool and beautiful today, I'm looking forward to tonight's feast." Rozanne who was wearing a light green dress greeted him with a smile from behind the reception desk.

Klein deliberately touched his stomach and said, "Miss Rozanne, you shouldn't be talking about that so early in the morning! I'm already sick of today's mission that has yet to arrive. I only hope for the evening to arrive sooner."

"Me too." Rozanne chuckled.

She looked to the left and right, then she beckoned for Klein to come closer. She lowered her voice and said, "I met Madam Daly earlier."

"Spirit Medium Madam Daly?" Klein asked in surprise.

The most famous Spirit Medium from Awwa County had been living at Enmat Harbor all this time, and it wasn't a short distance from Tingen.

"Yes." Rozanne gave a firm nod and said, "But, she has already left. Ah, she is my ideal Beyonder. If I were to become a Spirit Medium, I would leave Tingen and travel all around the world by myself. To Intis, to Feysac, to Feynapotter, to the Southern Continent; to the vast prairies, primitive forests, and snow-covered plains!"

Lady, be aware of the Nighthawks' rules… Klein shook his head in amusement.

"Even Madam Daly has to apply and obtain permission to leave Enmat Harbor."

"I know that, but you can't just remind me about it now and shatter my dreams!" Rozanne said peeved. "The truth is, I would never become a Beyonder. It's too dangerous. I don't know when I'll die from sudden gunfire. From what I've seen, Beyonders are basically people who turn themselves into monsters to fight against monsters."

"Archbishop Chanis said that we are guardians, but also a bunch of miserable wretches that are constantly fighting against threats and madness," Klein replied, sighing. The quote had left a deep impression on him.

To fight against the abyss, we have to endure the corruption of the abyss.

The two of them fell silent in unison. Rozanne was the first to break the silence as she pursed her lips towards the partition and said, "Captain wanted you to meet him when you arrived."

"Alright." With his hat and cane in hand, Klein passed through the partition and entered Dunn's office after knocking on the door.

A middle-aged gentleman with deep and serene gray eyes and a high hairline put down his coffee cup and said with a smile.

"Daly was here."

"Can't say that I'm surprised; Rozanne had just informed me," Klein replied with a smile.

Dunn didn't mind his humor but sighed.

"Daly was just transferred to the Backlund diocese, which is the world's busiest and most crowded city. They have the highest population of Beyonders and the most opportunities… She has a higher chance of becoming an archbishop or a senior deacon than me."

"Why?" Klein asked curiously as he took a seat.

Dunn thought for nearly twenty seconds before answering, "She has a unique talent in mastering and exploiting Sequence potions… I've mentioned the internal rule of the Nighthawks before. If you want to consume the next potion in the Sequence, you'll have to wait three years and go through a strict examination to prevent any loss of control. But typically, three years is far from sufficient. I spent three years going from a Sleepless to a Midnight Poet. It took me nine years to go from a Midnight Poet to Nightmare—a full nine years. And to go from Nightmare to Sequence 6, I've already spent three years. I have no idea how many more years I need.

"When our bodies age and our energy starts to decline, even if we overcome the latent dangers, we shouldn't attempt advancing anymore. This is because the risk of losing control at that point is so high that no one is willing to risk it.

"As for Daly, she is different from me and most Beyonders. After she became a Corpse Collector, she handed in a special application after only a year. She hoped to consume the follow-up potion immediately. What surprised everyone was that she actually passed through the stricter examination and obtained the Gravedigger potion.

"It only took her one more year to go from Gravedigger to Spirit Medium. Heh, this year will be her fifth year as a Beyonder. She is only twenty-four this year, young enough to have many opportunities ahead of her."

On the surface, she's the most famous spirit medium in Awwa County, but she truly is an actual Spirit Medium… Isn't that acting? Old Neil had apparently mentioned that Madam Daly had similar tendencies… Klein felt

that he had grasped the key reason for Madam Daly's quick ascension through the ranks.

"Captain, you're young enough as well. You're only in your thirties," Klein comforted Dunn, but added in his heart, *It's just that your memory isn't that great…*

Dunn drank a sip of his coffee. He shook his head and smiled bitterly.

"Why didn't you ask Madam Daly about her method of mastering and exploiting Sequence potions?" Klein purposely asked.

Dunn put down his coffee cup and massaged his temples as he spoke.

"She told me to become a true Nightmare… I don't know what that means."

Play the role of a Nightmare. Man, a Nightmare sounds sinister… Klein creased his eyebrows and temporarily fell silent.

Then, Dunn took out his smoking pipe and sniffed at it.

"Daly and I discussed the possibility of Seer's follow-up potion being Clown. Assuming that the member of the Seers didn't lie to you, she brought up an interesting hypothesis."

"What hypothesis?" Klein asked hurriedly, his eyes turning bright.

He had once used a divination method to determine if Clown was the follow-up potion of Seer. The answer he received had been vague, but it seemed close to being a confirmation.

Dunn's deep and serene gray eyes swept his gaze at him while he said in thought, "A normal Sequence pathway proceeds in a stepped manner. They advance according to a particular similarity. For instance, Sleepless, Midnight Poet, and Nightmare are all obviously related to the darkness of the night, as well as the peaceful sleep and tranquility that is generated from

sleep. It can be imagined that every subsequent Sequence would have identical traits, only with more power and a wider scope. They might be linked to secrets, disaster, horror, the crimson moon, etc…

"Certain Sequence pathways appear unrelated, but when we analyze them in detail, we can still find similarities, such as Assassin and Instigator. Their implied similarity is to bring people calamities, pain, sorrow, and despair. Hence, the follow-up Sequences should abide by this pattern."

Klein paid close attention and asked proactively, "But Seer and Clown doesn't have such a connection?"

"Yeah." Dunn nodded and said, "Daly believes that there might be Sequence pathways that share another kind of relationship. After all, there's a lot we do not know."

He paused for a moment before saying, "Daly said that, in this sort of pathway, the low to mid Sequence potions would respectively provide the Beyonder an ability that seems brand new and unrelated to the others. When the Beyonder reaches a point of qualitative change, these abilities will mix into an abnormally powerful 'job' that includes them all."

"In other words, the pathway doesn't advance step by step, but instead it's a relationship of dissection and combination."

Klein listened intently, but he felt lost. Dunn lifted his right hand and said, "A normal Sequence pathway advances a bit at a time, just like a child growing up. A growing child becomes taller, stronger, heavier, and more mature from a young age."

"While special Sequence pathways are more like…”

Having said this, Dunn lifted up his thumb.

"This is Sequence 9."

Then, he lifted up his index finger.

"This is Sequence 8."

Then, he gradually lifted up the rest of his fingers.

"Each and every finger is independent, and doesn't seem to be related to the others. But in the end…"

When he said the word 'end,' Dunn clenched his fingers into a tight fist!

"I understand now." Klein was suddenly enlightened. He agreed with Lady Daly's guess and the Captain's metaphor.

Maybe that's how it is? He nodded in deep thought.

Sequence 8 Clown and Sequence 9 Seer are completely different and have brand new abilities. And according to the description from the Nighthawks' intelligence, the corresponding Sequence 7 and Sequence 8 Clown don't share any similarities either…

Klein fell silent for a while before curiously pressing on, "At which stage would the different abilities combine to form a qualitative change?"

Dunn took another sip of coffee and chuckled.

"Daly and I guessed Sequence 4!"

"Why?" Klein blurted out.

"Because according to the way the churches categorize Sequences, Sequence 4 is the beginning point of the higher Sequences. It is said that merely achieving such a level brings about qualitative changes in vitality and energy. In ancient times, Sequence 4 Beyonders were qualified to be called demigods in the Fourth Epoch. It's a pity that such Beyonders are very rare in this era," Dunn said wistfully.

"If Sequence 4 to Sequence 1 are High-Sequence Beyonders, then who are the Low-Sequence Beyonders?" Klein asked with interest.

"Sequences 9 through 7 were considered as Low-Sequences a thousand years ago. But, in recent centuries, Beyonders are few in number and each church has listed Sequence 7 as a Mid-Sequence." Dunn laughed in a self-deprecating manner.

Sequence 9 and Sequence 8 are Low-Sequences. Then, Sequences 7 through 5 are Mid-Sequences. Finally, those Sequence 4 and above are High-Sequences… Klein repeated in his head and inevitably felt a yearning for that.

Emperor Roselle was a High-Sequence Beyonder!

However, the higher the Sequence, the greater the risk of losing control… Klein thought to himself in fear.

He asked as though in a seemingly casual manner, "What is the Sequence 4 potion for the Church of the Goddess called?"

"In actual fact, I'm not sure. My security clearance isn't high enough for me to be privy to that information. I'll be able to read them when I become a diocese bishop or Nighthawks deacon." Dunn shook his head and smiled. "In fact, at least half of the Church's thirteen archbishops and nine senior deacons at the top of the Church's hierarchy are below Sequence 4. Hmm, that's just me being optimistic. The archbishop Ince Zangwill, who became wanted, lost control when he tried to advance to Sequence 4."

The one who stole Sealed Artifact '0-08?' His potion was apparently called Gatekeeper… Klein thought and probed, "Is Sleepless Sequence 5 Gatekeeper?"

"No, that's in Spirit Medium's pathway. You'll be allowed to access that information when you reach Sequence 7 and become a bishop or a Captain of a Nighthawks team."

Gatekeeper is Sequence 5 of the Spirit Medium pathway? Does it mean that it's keeping watch over the gates to Hell? Or keeping watch over the gates to the Spirit World? Klein guessed.

"Alright, go to Old Neil and continue with your studies." Dunn smiled and said, "Don't forget about dinner tonight, at Old Will's Restaurant. Reservations have been made. I'll introduce you to the rest of the Nighthawks officially."

"Alright, I've already prepared the money." Klein forced a smile.

"No, there's no need. Have you forgotten that we have additional bonuses? The part about you completing an assigned mission." Dunn waved.

Klein was momentarily taken aback before replying with a beaming smile, "Alright, Captain."

He turned around and walked towards the door, while counting inwardly, *Three, two, one… Eh, why didn't Captain call me back?*

Klein dragged out "one" for a very long time, only to be surprised that Captain Dunn Smith hadn't forgotten add anything.

A miracle…

…

In the armory, Old Neil stole a glance at Klein, who was in a good mood.

"Don't be obsessed with tonight's dinner. You still have a lot of things to learn, such as more ritualistic magic, ancient Hermes, Dragonish, Elvish, and many more."

"Yeah, every afternoon besides your day off, you have to have at least two hours of combat training with an instructor."

"Combat training? Captain didn't mention it…" Klein was shocked.

Old Neil nodded and didn't hesitate to answer, "He forgot."

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CHAPTER 97
COMBAT TEACHER

At two in the afternoon, outside of a simple two-storied building that was in disrepair at the outskirts of the North Borough.

Klein, who was in his probationary inspector uniform, looked at the weed-filled garden and the vines that had crept up the walls. He turned his head in surprise.

"My combat instructor lives here?"

Shouldn't a combat artist who was selected by the Nighthawks be exceptional…

Leonard Mitchell, who had guided Klein there, snickered and said, "Don't underestimate Mr. Gawain because of his residence's surroundings. Although he was never conferred an aristocratic title, he was a true knight back in the day."

Having said that, the poetic Nighthawk, who was dressed in a white shirt, black trousers, and buttonless leather boots suddenly felt melancholic.

"He was active during the waning era of the knights. The warriors donning their armors would storm through enemy ranks despite the gunfire and cannon fire, destroying their enemies and redefining the battle lines. But alas, they were quickly met with the invention of the high-pressure steam guns and six-barrel machine guns. From then on, the knights had to gradually step down.

"Mr. Gawain met the same fate. More than twenty years ago, the Awwa Knights' Order of Chivalry faced the most advanced weaponry of the Intis Republic army… Sigh, every time I recall this, it seems like I'm touching the dust heaps of history. The poet in me stirs when thinking of this irreversible and fated destiny, but alas, I do not know how to compose the poem."

…Then what's the point in saying so much? Klein acted oblivious to Leonard's self-deprecation and gave a serious suggestion, "My university schoolmate once told me that the composing of poems requires a certain degree of talent. It's best you start by reading the Classical Poems Anthology of the Loen Kingdom."

Leonard's mood changed on a whim. He replied with a light-hearted tone, "I purchased that book a long time ago, as well as other titles, such as the Selected Poems of Roselle. I will work hard to become a true Midnight Poet, Mr. Seer"

Is he hinting at the… acting method? Klein replied, as though he couldn't understand him, "You would still need books on grammar."

"Alright, let's enter." Leonard extended his hand and pushed open the half-closed metallic gates. The two of them then followed the path towards the house.

They were still a distance away from the house when Klein saw a tall man walking out from behind the main door.

He had short blond hair, his brows already laced with white hairs. His facial features looked like they had been ravaged through age, his wrinkles were etched deep across his face.

"What are you doing here?" the aged man asked in a deep voice.

"Mr. Gawain, as per your contract with the police department, this probationary inspector will be learning the art of combat under your

guidance," Leonard explained with a smile.

"Combat? There's no need to study combat in this era." Gawain looked at Klein with turbid eyes and said in a dead voice, "You should learn how to draw your gun and shoot. You should master the most advanced weaponry."

Was this the psychological trauma caused by the six-barrel machine guns and high-pressure steam guns? Klein didn't give a reckless reply; instead, he smiled and looked at Leonard.

"The art of combat is still a skill a policeman has to master. Most of the criminals we face are not those who must be executed on the spot. Some might not even have weapons. In that case, we have to rely on combat techniques," Leonard said, obviously prepared for the situation.

With a dark expression, Gawain fell silent for more than ten seconds before saying, "Throw a punch."

He was speaking to Klein.

Klein, who was not holding his cane, remembered the boxing matches he had seen in his previous life. He raised his arm and threw it forward.

Gawain's lips twitched indiscernibly. He thought for a moment and said, "Kick."

Tilting to the side slightly and twisting his hips, Klein tightened his thigh muscles and kicked forward with his right foot.

Cough… Gawain covered his mouth and cleared his throat. He looked at Leonard and said, "I will honor my contract. But based on his foundation, he needs to come here four times a week, three hours each time, for the first month."

"You're the combat expert. It's up to you." Leonard nodded without hesitation. He smiled and said to Klein, "See you at dinner."

After Leonard walked out the metallic gates, Klein asked out of curiosity, "Instructor, how should I begin practicing? Punching, or footwork?"

As a qualified keyboard warrior, he understood the importance of footwork in combat.

Gawain stood akimbo as he shook his head lethargically.

"What you need now is strength training.

"See those? Those are two dumbbells made of steel. They shall be your partners for today.

"Other than that, you also have to practice deep squats, running, and rope-skipping. Let us take those one set at a time."

While Klein was still in a daze, Gawain suddenly raised his voice and said sternly, "Understood?"

"Understood!" At this moment, Klein felt as though he had returned to military training and was facing an inhumane instructor.

"Change out of your clothes. There's a set of knight's training clothes on the sofa." Gawain suddenly sighed. He turned around and walked toward the black steel dumbbells.

…

Six in the evening, at a corner table of the Old Will Restaurant.

Other than Frye, who was guarding Chanis Gate, all the members of the Blackthorn Security Company were present. There were six Nighthawks and five civilian staff.

A white tablecloth was draped over the long table. Waiters carried over plates of food, portioned them before serving them to each individual guest.

Klein saw steaks drenched in black pepper sauce. He saw bacon, sausages paired with mashed potatoes, egg puddings, asparagus, and specialty cheeses. He even saw rose-colored champagne. However, he had no appetite. The training in the afternoon had nearly made him vomit.

Noticing the pale, newly-inducted Nighthawk with turbid eyes, Dunn raised the glass of red wine in front of him and laughed.

"Let us welcome our newest official member, Klein Moretti, cheers!"

The cold and introverted black-haired lady, Royale Reideen, the Sleepless Kenley White, the sloppy Leonard Mitchell, as well as the white-haired, black-eyed Midnight Poet Seeka Tron all raised their cups and looked at the new member of their team.

Klein fought back the discomfort of the training and raised his glass of amber champagne. He stood and said, "Thank you."

He clinked glasses with every Nighthawk, tilted his head back, and finished the small amount of champagne.

"Is our Miss Author not going to say something on this occasion?" Dunn smiled as he looked at Seeka Tron.

Seeka Tron was a lady in her thirties. She had average looks, but had an exceptional demeanor, one that was quiet and serene. Coupled with her few strands of graying hair, it added a unique charm to her.

Klein had heard Old Neil mention that this Midnight Poet had taken on a side job as an author and had attempted to submit her works to newspapers and magazines. Unfortunately, only a few smaller newspapers had accepted them.

Seeka smiled and looked at Dunn.

"In order to make the term 'Miss Author' into a reality, Captain, I think you should give me some funds to self-publish my work."

Dunn laughed.

"You should learn from Old Neil and give me a more suitable reason."

"I'm most impressed with Mr. Neil in this department!" Rozanne echoed in-between her mouthfuls of roast mutton.

Amidst the chatter and laughter, Leonard looked at Klein and said with a chuckle, "Are you so tired that you have no appetite to eat?"

"Yeah." Klein sighed.

"If you haven't touched your food yet, I can be of assistance." Leonard acted as though he didn't want to waste any food.

Klein didn't mind. He nodded and said, "That wouldn't be an issue."

And with that, a good portion of the food in front of him was eaten by Leonard and the rest.

Nearing the end of the dinner, the waiters served plates of beef pudding and ice-cream.

Klein tasted ice-cream and found it cold and sweet. It was particularly appetizing.

Before he realized it, he had finished the ice-cream drizzled with a blueberry sauce.

And as a result of this, he started to feel the hunger pangs. It was a hunger which demanded recharging food that came after intense exertion.

Swallowing his saliva, Klein looked to the front, only to see that all the plates were empty. There were no leftovers.

"Let's end the dinner here, and give Klein a final toast," Dunn suggested.

Before finishing his sentence, Klein asked, "Captain, may I order another plate of food?"

The group fell silent after hearing such a request, only to break out into chuckles moments later.

"Haha, you've finally recovered. No problem, order two plates if you want to." Dunn shook his head and laughed.

While patiently waiting an unbearable amount of time, Klein heard his stomach growling.

Finally, a freshly prepared black pepper steak was served before him.

His fork and knife danced as Klein finished the medium-done steak in ninety seconds, tears nearly falling from his eyes. The meat juices and the fragrance of the sauce lingered in his mouth.

Sometime later, Klein let out a satisfied sigh as he looked at his empty plate. He put down his knife and fork and took a sip of his champagne.

"Waiter, the bill please." Dunn turned around and called for the waiter.

The waiter went to the counter, then returned with the check. He gave a thorough breakdown,

"You opened five bottles of Desi Champagne, each bottle being twelve soli and three pence, a small glass of Southville Red Wine for ten pence… Each black pepper beef steak was one soli two pence… Each serving of beef pudding was six pence, the servings of ice cream was one soli each… The total would be five pounds, nine soli, and six pence."

Five pounds, nine soli, and six pence? That's nearly my weekly salary! A restaurant is indeed much more expensive than eating at home! Klein clicked his tongue upon hearing that. He felt lucky that the Captain had said that he didn't need to pay out of his own pocket. They had some petty cash from bonus earnings!

He calculated the cost carefully and noticed that the most expensive portion of the meal was the alcohol. Five bottles of champagne had cost more than three pounds!

This is no different from Earth… Klein secretly rubbed his stomach and forced down the last of his champagne.

…

The next morning, Klein felt bloated. He tried to get off the bed in his sleepy stupor.

Just as he exerted strength, he was instantly awakened by his aching muscles. He felt as though his body wasn't under his control.

"What a familiar feeling… It's the same as that day after we got punished with frog jumps. Today is a rest day, but I still have to pay a visit to my mentor and see if I can borrow the monograph on the Hornacis main peak from the library at the University…" Klein's lips twitched as he made his way outside with some effort.

He wanted to draw a gasp with every step.

"Klein, what happened to you?" Melissa, who had just come out of the bathroom, sized up her brother suspiciously for his odd posture and slow movement.

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CHAPTER 98
MR. AZIK

Faced with his sister's question, all Klein could do was reply with a regretful smile, "Sore muscles."

He originally believed that by consuming the Sequence potion, his constitution would be enhanced as a Beyonder, but the harsh reality told him that a Seer's stats points were all allocated to his spirituality, mind, intuition, and interpretation. It didn't aid him in adjusting to combat training quickly.

As for the original Klein, he had focused on his studies early on and had suffered from malnutrition. That led him to possess a below-average physical condition. The fact that he was having 'after effects' from working out was to be expected.

"Sore muscles? I remember you returning after dinner last night and you didn't do anything else… Does alcohol cause sore muscles?" Melissa inquired with an inquisitive look.

Does alcohol cause sore muscles… Sis, that question… can't help but make me have inappropriate thoughts… Klein laughed dryly and said, "No, this has nothing to do with alcohol. It was from yesterday afternoon. I joined the company's combat training."

"Combat?" Melissa was even more astonished.

Klein organized his thoughts and said, "Well, this is what happened. I considered it and believe that as a historical and relic consultant of a security company, it's impossible for me to stay in the office or port

warehouse forever. Perhaps there will come a day when I have to accompany them to the villages or an ancient castle, to the site of some relic. That might require me to hike, to cross rivers, and to walk a lot. I'll have to endure all sorts of tests posed by nature, so I have to possess a sufficiently healthy body."

"So you joined combat training to enhance your stamina?" Melissa seemed to understand her brother's intention.

"That's right," Klein answered with great affirmation.

Melissa said with a frown, "But that isn't gentlemanly… Don't you always keep yourself to the standards of a professor? A professor only requires the ability to read historical documents, ponder over difficult questions, and maintain a polite and gentlemanly demeanor.

"Of course, I'm not saying that those aren't all good things. I prefer men who can solve problems on their own, regardless of whether that solution requires brawn or brain."

Melissa smiled.

Klein smiled and said, "No, no, no, Melissa. Your definition of a professor contains a misconception. A true professor can communicate with people gently and politely, but he can also educate the other person using the principles of physics by raising a cane to convince someone when there is an obstacle in communication."

"Principles of physics…" Melissa was momentarily at a loss, but she quickly understood what her brother was saying. She was suddenly unable to retort him.

Klein didn't say anything more but widened his pace with great difficulty as he headed for the bathroom.

Melissa stood there and looked for a few seconds. She suddenly shook her head and caught up to Klein.

"Do you need my help?"

She posed as if she was supporting someone.

"No, there's no need to. I was hamming it up a bit earlier." Klein felt humiliated. He suddenly stood straight and walked normally.

Watching her brother walk steadily to the washroom and close the door, Melissa pursed her lips and muttered, "Klein is getting more and more pretentious… I even believed that his muscle soreness was really that serious…"

In the bathroom, Klein stood behind the tightly shut door, his face suddenly contorting in pain.

Ouch, ouch, ouch… He held his breath, tensed his body, and stood there for a good seven or eight seconds.

When he finally went downstairs with great effort, had breakfast, and saw Benson and Melissa off, his soreness finally began to ease.

After resting for a little while, Klein took his cane, donned his top hat, and left the house, strolling towards the public carriage stop.

…

During the summer, Khoy University had trees with shade-providing foliage, flourishing with birds and luxuriant flowers. It was peaceful and calm.

Walking along the river, Klein took a turn towards the history department. Then, he found the three-story building which showed its age and located his mentor's, Cohen Quentin's, office.

He knocked and entered the room, but he was shocked to see that the man sitting at his mentor's seat was the academic, Azik.

"Good morning, Mr. Azik, Where's my mentor? We made an appointment by letter to meet here at ten," Klein asked, puzzled.

Azik, who was Cohen Quentin's best friend and often debated with his mentor regarding academic topics, smiled and said, "Cohen had a last minute meeting and went to Tingen University. He asked me to wait for you here."

He had bronze skin, an average height and build, black hair, brown eyes, and gentle facial features. Being in his presence brought on an indescribable feeling, as though you could see in the man's eyes that he had been through the vicissitudes of life. Under his right ear was a tiny mole that one wouldn't notice unless closely examined.

Having said the reason, Azik suddenly frowned as he carefully observed Klein.

Feeling confused by the sudden scrutiny, Klein looked at his attire. "Have I committed some breach of etiquette?"

Tuxedo, black vest, white shirt, black bow tie, dark colored trousers, leather boots with no buttons… Everything seems normal…

Azik's brows eased and he chuckled softly.

"Don't mind me. I suddenly noticed that you are way more energetic than before. You look even more like a gentleman now."

"Thank you for your compliment." Klein accepted it calmly and asked, "Mr. Azik, did my mentor manage to find the book 'Research of the Hornacis Main Peak's Relics' in the school library?"

"He found it with my assistance," Azik said, smiling gently. He then pulled open the drawer and took out a gray-covered book. "You are no longer a Khoy University student anymore. You can read it here, but you cannot take it home."

"Alright." Klein delightfully took the academic monograph, and with a hint of fear.

The book's design was fully in-line with the current trends; it used hard paper as a hardcover and it was printed with an image like an abstract version of the main peak of Hornacis mountain range.

Klein took a glance and found a seat. He flipped open the book and started reading carefully, line by line.

As he became engrossed in the book, he suddenly realized that there was a cup of rich and fragrant coffee by his side.

"Help yourself to the sugar and milk." Azik put down the silver saucer and pointed at the milk jar and sugar container.

"Thank you." Klein nodded with gratitude.

He added three cubes of sugar and a teaspoon of milk before continuing to read his book.

The book, Research of the Hornacis Main Peak's Relics, was not a very thick book. Klein finished reading it when it was almost noon. He took note of a few noteworthy points.

First, the settlement on the main peak of Hornacis Mountain and its surrounding area was obviously an advanced civilization, which existed as part of an ancient nation.

Second, from their wall murals, their perspective on life appears similar to that of humans. I can assume for now that they were human.

Third, they revered yet feared the darkness of the night. Hence, they called their god the Ruler of the Evernight, Mother of the Sky.

Fourth, the weirdest part is that researchers haven't found any graves in the entire area, which initially seems to indicate that the people didn't need to be buried, because they didn't die. However, that would be contradictory to the contents of the wall murals. In the wall murals, the people in the nation believed that death is not the end. They believed that their deceased family would protect them in the night. Hence, they would keep their deceased family members at home, on the bed, by their side, for a full three days.

There is nothing beyond that for the wall murals as it doesn't involve burials.

Klein took another sip of coffee and continued to write down his 'afterthoughts' in his notebook.

Mother of the Sky, Skymother is such a grand title, while the Ruler of the Evernight obviously overlaps with the Evernight Goddess… Is this a contradiction at its roots?

In the ancient remains on the main peak of the Hornacis mountain range and its surrounding area, every arrangement and decoration was well-preserved. Even the wall murals didn't have any signs of damage. Before it was discovered, there seemed to be no disturbance at all… The table was arranged with cutlery, and there were dried stains of rot on the dining plates… In some rooms, there were half-filled bottles of alcohol that had almost turned into plain water…

What happened to the nation's people? They seemed to have left their homes in a hurry, without taking anything with them, and they never returned.

Considering how there are no burial grounds, this only makes it weirder.

The author, Mr. Joseph, also mentioned that when he first discovered the remains, he even had the belief that the people residing there had just vanished all of a sudden.

Klein stopped writing and cast his gaze at an illustration.

On John Joseph's third visit to the main peak of the Hornacis mountain range, he had used a new camera model to shoot a monochrome photograph.

In the photo, the lofty palace had a collapsed wall and was overgrown with weeds. It followed a grandeur style for its design.

When he flipped to the photograph, Klein's first thought was that of the palace he had seen in his dream.

The two styles were identical. The only difference was that the one he had dreamed of was on a peak and it was way more magnificent. It also had a huge chair—a seat of honor—that looked like it didn't seat a human. Countless translucent maggots clustered together and squirmed slowly beneath the chair.

I can confirm that my dream is related to the ancient remains on the main peak of the Hornacis mountain range… That should be the Nation of the Evernight which was referenced in the Antigonus family's notebook… Klein nodded slightly and closed the book.

At that moment, Azik, who was sitting opposite him touched the inconspicuous mole under his right ear and said, "How was it? Found anything?"

"Quite a bit. Take a look, I've written so many pages of notes." Klein pointed at the table and smiled.

"I don't understand why you're suddenly so interested in this matter." Azik sighed and said, "Klein, when I was studying at the Backlund University, I

had dabbled with some divination and did quite a bit of research on that. Well, I discovered that there is disharmony… in your fate."

What? Divination? Are you talking to me about divination? As a Seer, Klein looked at Azik the academic in amusement.

"How is it disharmonious?"

Azik thought for a moment.

"Have you encountered many strange coincidences in the past two months?"

"Coincidences?" As he was indebted to Mr. Azik, Klein didn't dispute his question as he subconsciously began thinking.

If we are talking about coincidences, the most obvious matter was when we were after kidnappers. We actually managed to find clues of the Antigonus family's notebook that was lost for days in the room opposite the kidnappers.

Also, Ray Bieber didn't flee from Tingen in a hurry; instead, he found a place to digest the power bestowed by the notebook, allowing for Sealed Artifact 2-049 to track him down easily. That seemed to be against common sense. Although Aiur Harson gave a reasonable explanation, I always had a nagging feeling that it was somewhat coincidental…

Oh, Selena had stolen a glance at Hanass Vincent's secret incantations, but she held back till her birthday dinner banquet to try it out, and I happened to discover it, which is quite a coincidence too. Otherwise, Hanass Vincent wouldn't have been the only one to die so suddenly…

Klein thought about it seriously for a few minutes and said, "There are three. Neither too many, nor too frequent. Furthermore, there was nothing that indicated someone's involvement and guidance."

Azik nodded slightly.

"As Emperor Roselle once said, a single coincidence is encountered by anyone. Twice is still normal. Thrice is when one should consider what internal factors are influencing those coincidences."

"Can you tell me anything else?" Klein probed.

Azik laughed and shook his head.

"I can only tell that there's some disharmony, but nothing else. You have to understand that I'm not a real seer."

Isn't that basically equal to saying nothing… Mr. Azik is quite odd… He's playing a charlatan in front of a charlatan like me… Klein let out a breath, seizing the moment when Azik stood up, he pinched his glabella and activated his Spirit Vision.

When he looked over, Azik's aura fully appeared before his eyes and everything seemed fairly normal.

Unfortunately, I can only see the Ether Body and Astral Projection of a person above the gray fog… Klein thought carefreely as he tapped his glabella again whilst standing up.

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CHAPTER 99
RED CHIMNEY

Late in the afternoon, Klein returned home and drew the curtains, allowing his room to slip into darkness.

He took out his pen and paper and thought for a long time, finally writing down a sentence: "The kidnapping of Elliott was due to Beyonder elements."

As a Seer, Klein had tried to divine if those coincidences were a consequence of unnatural developments, but the results showed otherwise.

This time, he was influenced by Azik to look into these events again. He also drew lessons from the suited clown. He seriously designed an appropriate divination statement, eliminating any descriptions that might be vague or cause confusion.

"Yes, I should break down the three coincidences and divine them separately…" Klein nodded in thought as he slowly removed the topaz from his wrist.

He held the spirit pendulum with his left hand and allowed it to hang close over the divination statement on the paper.

He collected himself and entered a state of Cogitation. With his eyes closed, Klein started chanting repeatedly, "The kidnapping of Elliott was due to Beyonder elements."

…

As he recited the statement over and over again, Klein opened his eyes and looked at the pendulum, only to see the topaz turning counterclockwise slowly.

"It's still a negative…" Klein muttered to himself. He designed several other divination statements, but the results persisted—there was nothing strange about that incident.

He then separately divined the "event of Ray Bieber's stay in Tingen" and "Selena's magic mirror divination incident," but the answers for both events were normal.

Heh, was I, a real Seer, frightened by the charlatan Mr. Azik? Besides, Captain and the others didn't feel that anything was off… Klein laughed and shook his head. But he remained cautious. He planned on using the dream divination technique to get a final confirmation.

After some thought, he changed the divination statement to fit the change in method.

"The true reason for Elliott's kidnapping." As he scribbled with the fountain pen, Klein paused and pondered over his words.

After reading it over and over again, he tore the slip of paper and walked toward his bed. He relaxed and laid down.

With the divination statement in hand, Klein quickly fell asleep with the help of Cogitation.

He found himself in a contorted, broken world. Regaining his senses, he began swimming through the blur.

Gradually, he saw the few kidnappers. He saw them lose their final chip at a gambling table, saw them obtain guns from underground sources, and saw them survey the area. They even rented the apartment across Ray Bieber's apartment as their hideout…

These didn't form a continuous scene, instead, they were presented in the form of flashing pictures. Klein couldn't find anything that was abnormal.

Furthermore, it had also aligned with the statements given by the kidnappers.

After exiting the dream, Klein separately divined the other two incidents but had the same result. Their developments followed logic. The coincidences were really coincidences.

"I was indeed overthinking things. Mr. Azik is merely a divination enthusiast…" Klein stabilized his pendulum and shook his head with a bitter smile.

He was about to draw the curtains and allow sunlight into the room when he froze.

"From the original Klein's impression of Mr. Azik, he is a dependable and trustworthy person. He had never once said anything baseless. Even if he was always quarreling with Mentor, it was limited to academic topics, and each of them had their reasons… If he was truly a mere divination enthusiast, he wouldn't have interacted with me like that… And the memories of original Klein has nothing about him liking divination… Of course, this could be due to the loss of a corresponding memories…" Klein frowned and couldn't ease his worries. He needed a way to confirm this.

He suspected that Mr. Azik had unwittingly come across some insider information and was trying to remind him by using divination as an excuse.

"How should I confirm this?" Klein paced back and forth across the dark room, trying to recall the other divination techniques he knew.

One step, two steps, three steps. He suddenly halted as an idea came to him.

"Let's assume that these coincidences are dubious. I'm unable to divine a result either because my Sequence isn't high enough or I'm being affected

by outside interference, but I can change my environment! I can change my environment to someplace that is even more mysterious and even harder to understand." Klein felt pumped. He pulled open his drawer and took out a silver dagger.

He concentrated and allowed his spirituality to flow out from the tip of the dagger, becoming one with his surroundings.

With each step he took, the wall of spirituality sealed off the entire room.

Klein planned on doing the divination above the gray fog, to do the divination in that mysterious world!

…

In the magnificent ancient divine hall above the endless gray fog.

Klein sat at the seat of honor on one end of the bronze table. Before him was a piece of goatskin he willed into existence.

He lifted a pen and tried writing the divination statement as he had previously.

"The kidnapping of Elliott was due to Beyonder elements."

He held the spirit pendulum and hung it low. Klein quickly composed himself as he turned silent and ethereal.

Half-closing his eyes, he recited the statement seven times, using his spirituality to interact with the spiritual world that stood above all.

Feeling the tug of the silver chain, Klein opened his eyes to look at the pendulum.

The sight made him freeze immediately.

The pendulum was spinning clockwise!

This meant that there was a Beyonder element behind Elliott's kidnapping!

This was completely different from the result he had gotten in the outside world!

There were no traces of any interference… Such power or means is terrifying… What's the motive of the person behind this? Is my fate intertwined with the Antigonus family's diary? Klein was immensely shocked. He lost his calm and the rotation of the pendulum slipped into chaos.

He put down the topaz and rubbed his glabella. His expression was abnormally grave.

After contemplating for a few seconds, he didn't attempt to divine the other two events. Instead, he wrote a new divination statement: "The true reason for Elliott's kidnapping."

He held the paper in his hand and recited the statement seven times. Klein leaned back and fell into sleep above the fog.

Soon, he saw a boundless, illusory grayish-white fog.

The fog dissipated slowly, revealing a colorful grass plain filled with flowers.

The space behind the flowers and the plains was folding into itself, like a monster that had come alive.

Klein tried his best to look forward, barely making out an image of a dark red chimney.

At this point, the scene before him shattered, putting an end to his dream.

Klein abruptly straightened his back in the majestic divine hall. His heart was beating wildly without reason.

Phew… It felt like I had just spied on a terrifying thing… He took in two deep breaths to stabilize his chaotic emotions.

Tap. Tap. Tap. Klein tapped on the side of the table sometime later and slipped into deep thought.

Red chimney… garden… grass plains… How is this related to the person behind all of this? I cannot determine his motive from the coincidences, nor can I conclude that there is any evil intent…

In the midst of this thinking, Klein felt alarmed, for himself, Captain, Frye, and the others.

We are like puppets dancing on a string. What's even scarier is that we thought so highly of ourselves…

Sigh… I don't know how to raise this matter to Captain. Old Neil's divination produced the same results as mine in the outside world… If they asked me to confirm it in front of them, I have no way of doing that… Klein rubbed his temples as if he had a headache.

After nearly twenty seconds of calm, he began divining the "event of Ray Bieber's stay in Tingen." Similarly, he first used spirit dowsing.

This time, Klein was shocked to see his topaz hang motionless. It was neither a confirmation or rejection of the statement.

"Strange…” he muttered. He started to guess the reasons for this phenomenon, "The person behind this has sensed my divinations and engaged in countermeasures?"

Following this, he tried the dream divination technique, but all he saw were fragmented pieces of fog. He no longer made any new discoveries.

The results of "Selena's magic mirror divination incident" were the same.

Klein could almost confirm his conjecture at this point. Since he had no way of notifying Captain Dunn Smith for the time being, he had an unprecedented motivation to improve his abilities.

"I must head to the Divination Club later and quickly succeed in my 'acting' to digest the Seer potion… Also, I have to confirm whether the Clown potion is indeed the subsequent Sequence of Seer, as well as gather clues about it… In addition, I have to interact more with Mr. Azik and see if I can dig up whatever inside information he holds…" Klein held his forehead with his right palm and quickly drew up a plan, and determined his focal point.

After some thought, a goatskin appeared in front of him again. He picked up his pen and wrote:

"The corresponding Sequence 8 of Sequence 9 Seer is Clown."

From his prior experience, the present Klein was completely convinced that his divination abilities were augmented and enhanced above the gray fog.

"Just like how raids are usually successful… is this the result of having good luck?" he muttered and picked up his spirit pendulum.

Sometime later, Klein received a definitive answer:

The corresponding Sequence 8 of Sequence 9 Seer was Clown!

He then wrote on the paper once again.

"The corresponding Sequences 8, 7, 6, and 5 of Seer would grant at least one brand new, unrelated power."

Klein exhaled as he tried spirit dowsing again.

However, he saw the topaz hang motionlessly without any rotations.

"There isn't enough information to complete the divination and receive a revelation?" he muttered to himself while seemingly deep in thought. Then, he set down the silver chain and began considering the required statement for a dream divination.

Nearly twenty seconds later, he picked up his fountain pen and wrote seriously: "Clues to the Clown potion."

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CHAPTER 100
INTERPRETING SYMBOLS

"Clues to the Clown potion."

…

On the seat of honor at the ancient bronze table, Klein repeated the divination statement a few times before leaning back and entering a deep sleep.

His surroundings quickly became peaceful and quiet. He saw a hazy view, with countless distorted and blurry scenes flashing past, just like drops of morning dew on tender flower petals.

Gradually, Klein grasped his spirituality and came to his senses.

He saw a fireplace before him with a rocking chair in front of it. Sitting on it was an old woman dressed in black and white.

Although he couldn't see her face since she was hanging her head low, Klein's gut feeling told him that she was an old lady. And he was pretty certain about it.

The old lady was facing a desk directly. There were newspapers and tin cans inlaid with silver on the desk.

"This is…” Klein found the scene before his eyes very familiar, and he quickly recognized what he saw.

This was where Ray Bieber and his mother stayed!

This was where he saw a bloated cadaver for the first time!

"There are clues that point to the Clown potion here?" Just as Klein's thoughts flashed past, the scene around him transformed.

It was a grayish-white warehouse, hidden among identical buildings.

There were white bones scattered all around, and a few balls of flesh that looked like they had been squashed by a boulder.

In the middle of the warehouse was a grayish-white object that was the size of a fist. Its surface was filled with ditches and it looked soft but ductile. It looked like a brain that had been extracted out of a living being.

Just as Klein recognized the scene and recalled something, the scene before him distorted like rippling water before transforming into another new blurry scene.

A naked body was laid on a long table covered with a white cloth. There were some bluish, discolored patches on the corpse's skin.

Klein suddenly knitted his eyebrows and muttered, "It was first the images of Ray Bieber's hiding place and his remains, and now, it's related to the brand on the suited clown's wrist?"

Just as he attempted to speculate what the scenes meant, the scene suddenly changed again.

A marble coffee table, a set of two leather couches, and a chandelier that hung high on the ceiling.

There were three people—Klein Moretti, who had black hair, brown eyes, and a scholarly temperament; a wealthy man with a chubby body and pale skin; and a beautiful young lady with fishnet gloves.

Following that, it was another three people and an object—a middle-aged man in a black robe who had thick spiky brown hair; a wealthy man with a chubby body and pale skin; a half-century-old elder with messy eyebrows, thin brown hair, and gray-blue eyes; and a black notebook on the round table in-between all of them, a notebook that exuded an ancient and distant air.

The Antigonus family's notebook!

Klein suddenly sat up straight and the dream vanished.

Looking outside the divine hall where there was boundless gray fog and crimson stars, he thought in both shock and confusion.

I was divining for clues to the Clown potion… Why would the Antigonus family's notebook show up?

Let me think, let me think, that chubby guy was Welch. Yes, Welch, an unfortunate fella who bought the Antigonus family's notebook and triggered a sequence of incidents… The beautiful young lady wearing fishnet gloves was Naya…

I remember, the marble coffee table and leather couch combination is a hallmark of Welch's place. I saw Spirit Medium Daly there.

In other words, what I saw was Welch's living room. It was a scene where the original Klein and his two classmates were discussing the notebook.

Klein calmed himself down and tapped on the edge of the long bronze table rhythmically.

Then, what does the last scene represent? The notebook appeared, Welch appeared. Could it be the scene where he bought the ancient item?

There were another two people, and one of them looked very familiar. I feel like I've seen the middle-aged man in the classic black robe somewhere before… That spiky brown hair, severe dark eye circles… Yes, I know who is

he now. Hanass Vincent from the Divination Club, the Hanass Vincent who 'died peacefully' after Captain snuck into his dream, having learned that Selena secretly obtained the secret incantation from him!

No way, he was the one that sold the notebook to Welch?

Everything appears to be coming full circle. The world sure is small, no—Tingen is really small! On careful thought, it really is a possibility that Hanass Vincent wasn't an ordinary fortune-teller. He was obviously deep into mysticism and obtained the attention of an ancient evil god. He had the channels, ability, and opportunity to acquire the notebook that was accidentally released by the Secret Order…

It's no wonder Captain and company never figured out where Welch bought the notebook. Their investigative approach was entirely wrong. They had attempted to investigate via the antique market… But when the actual whereabouts of the notebook was found, they gave up on that lead.

What a pity, Hanass Vincent just passed away not too long ago. Otherwise, we definitely could've found out something regarding the notebook… Since he was involved in mysticism, he should've researched the notebook… His death was way too coincidental!

However, there was another person at the scene, a man in his fifties. He might know quite a bit of what happened.

Klein stopped tapping his fingers on the edge of the table and looked through every scene of his dream divination once more.

Ray Bieber's house, Ray Bieber's hideout spot, the remains of Ray Bieber, the brand on the suited clown's wrist, Welch's house; Welch, Naya, and original Klein's exchange; Welch, Hanass Vincent, and the Antigonus family notebook's 'group photo'. Hehe, besides the brand on the suited clown, everything else is directly related to the Antigonus family's notebook!

But I had divined for clues to the Clown potion… This isn't scientific, nor does it make mystical sense!

After becoming a Seer, Klein once tried to divine where Welch had bought the Antigonus family's notebook, but he never considered using the unique qualities that the area above the gray fog possessed. As such, he had failed to receive any revelations, but now, he had chanced upon the truth by divining something separate.

After spending nearly twenty seconds to calm down, Klein summarized the context provided by Roselle's diary and attempted to interpret his dream divination.

The first possibility: Zaratul or should I say, the Secret Order, was searching and pursuing the relics of the Antigonus family. So, the symbolic meaning of the dream is to use matters related to the Antigonus family to lure the Secret Order into appearing, so as to obtain the Clown potion's formula.

The second possibility: the Clown potion's formula is directly recorded in the Antigonus family's notebook… The fact that the Zaratul family is seeking the relics of the Antigonus family implies that they share very deep connections. They could've been allies or enemies. Hence, it seems fairly natural that the Antigonus family possessed parts of their Sequence. Things would be obvious if they were allies, but enemies are the ones who would know each other the best…

But the second explanation wouldn't be able to link it to the brand on the suited clown. Sigh, I do wish that the second explanation were true though. When the Holy Cathedral finds an expert to interpret the notebook, I would be able to obtain the Clown potion without any risk.

It seems that the first explanation is the most plausible. My gut feeling as a Seer tells me that there might be a deeper symbolic meaning.

Having thought of this, Klein massaged his forehead and suddenly realized the limitations of a Seer.

Unless it was a very simple and straightforward sign, a Seer had to be extremely careful when making interpretations. It was just like walking on the edge of the abyss or walking on a thin layer of ice over a lake's surface. The suited clown's outcome was an actual and bloody example of what a single mistake in interpretation or failure to grasp a key point could result in!

In that instant, Klein had an illusion of himself mastering the true essence of a Seer. He seemed to be just one step away from digesting the potion completely.

"Thank you for enlightening me with your life… Praise the Lady!" he muttered and drew a crimson moon before his chest.

Then he divined whether Azik had good intentions or if he was an amazing Beyonder. He received confirmations for both of them.

Eventually, the continuous divinations exhausted Klein. He had no choice but to stop churning through his thoughts and decide on the crucial matters that he needed to attend to.

I have to find the man that appeared in the same scene with Welch, Hanass Vincent, and the Antigonus family's notebook as soon as possible!

I can begin my search with the Divination Club.

I can't just confront Mr. Azik. Yes, he might be a Mid-Sequence Beyonder of the Life School of Thought, but there's a lack of information, making it impossible for me to divine…

Phew. Klein let out a breath and conjured the portrait of the half-century-old elder with messy eyebrows, thin brown hair, and gray-blue eyes on the goatskin that appeared before him.

This was the third person present when the Antigonus family's notebook was traded between Welch and Hanass Vincent!

Looking at the portrait, Klein suddenly fell into a dilemma.

I can't draw. During art class in primary school, I was always the one receiving the greatest criticism from the teachers.

Should I use ritualistic magic like Old Neil? This was done by praying to the Goddess… If I were to use the uniqueness of the area above the gray fog… I would be in trouble if the divinities noticed something amiss!

Hold on a second, perhaps I can pray to myself! Transmitting images and transmitting voices are similar… Although I'm temporarily unable to access the mysterious power above the gray fog, accomplishing such a minor matter shouldn't be a problem!

Having thought of this, Klein immediately emanated his spirituality to envelop himself to stimulate the feeling of falling.

Back in his bedroom, he lit the gas lamp and 'prayed.'

"The Fool that doesn't belong to this era;

"You are the mysterious ruler above the gray fog;

"You are the King of Yellow and Black who wields good luck;

"I pray for your revelation and pray that you allow me to draw what I've seen."

After reciting the incantation, Klein didn't splash essential oils or burn any herbs to gain the help of their powers.

It was just that informal when praying to oneself!

There were suddenly murmurs in his ears as he saw the four black dots that formed a square surface on the back of his hand.

He walked four steps counterclockwise and recited the incantation before penetrating the maniacal chaos to return to the area above the gray fog.

This time he didn't see any of the crimson stars shrinking or expanding. But behind the seat of honor at the long bronze table, the strange symbol formed by a partial Pupil-less Eye and partial contorted lines shimmered weakly as it produced illusory prayers.

Klein held his ear to it and listened. After making sure that there were no mistakes, he conjured the portrait of the 'third person', and cast it towards the flowing light in accordance to the prayer's format.

After everything was done, he immediately left the mysterious world above the gray fog and returned to his bedroom.

Just as he found his footing, a portrait surfaced immediately in front of Klein's eyes. Furthermore, he sensed a weak and illusory power augmenting him.

He picked up a fountain pen and found a piece of white paper and expressed his intent.

Klein was surprised to find his right hand moving uncontrollably as it quickly drew lines.

Before long, he saw a lifelike portrait of the 'third person'.

After writing down the hair and eye colors, as well as other unique characteristics, Klein heaved a sigh of relief despite the spasms of his right hand.

The illusion before his eyes rapidly dissipated.

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